

CHS GRADUATION

Pride runs #RiverDeep for '14 Class

BY BRENDEN WEST
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CLINTON — Mitch Leonard seized the moment. In a speech that was supposed to be about tradition, Leonard pulled his smartphone from under his graduation gown, turned away from the microphone and took an Ellen-style selfie with his co-graduates seated behind him.

“You only live once,” Leonard said. In other words, he exclaimed: “YOLO!” For Clinton High’s Class of 2014, a group of 240 students, their four years spent with the school were marked not just by tradition, but fighting spirit and loyalty. It’s a group that includes national scholars, musicians, artists and, even as recently as Saturday, state champion athletes.

Leonard, Jacob Simpson and Samantha Burns all noted these accomplishments, adding more are bound for this group of students.

“Our pride runs (hashtag) #RiverDeep,” Leonard said, delivering peace signs to the audience.



Clinton High School graduate Mitch Leonard (left) shakes hands with teacher Brian Galusha after receiving his diploma. Leonard also delivered a speech on loyalty, stating “You only live once — YOLO!”

While Simpson's speech featured fewer gestures, his message was similar, highlighting the numerous feats his classmates achieved.

"It is clear that fighting spirit has gotten us to where we are today," he said.

Added Burns: "I'm pleased to tell you that everyone in this class has left an impact in some way. We will forever be kings and queens no matter where our paths may take us." Graduation was

also marked as principal Karinne Tharaldson Jones' last. In July, she will begin a new career at the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency.

Superintendent Deb Olson thanked Tharaldson Jones for her commitment to students, prompting a round of applause.

"Through her leadership and guidance, CHS has become one of the exemplary high schools in the state of Iowa," Olson said. "I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank her for all the work she has done for Clinton High School and the district and wish her well as she moves forward in a different career position." Students then obtained their diplomas as families tried to contain their collected excitement for this class. Many of these students are moving on to chapters at the next level of education - college.

For Leonard, again this embodied another reason to be proud. The class started in five different elementary schools, joined in two middle schools then left its legacy at Clinton High.

Quoting the rapper Drake, the hashtag-wielding student proclaimed: "Started from the bottom now we're here."



Family beheld 224 graduates who received their diplomas during Clinton High School's graduation ceremony Sunday.

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Samantha Burns