

## GRADUATION

### Student speakers reflect on CHS, future

#### *Three students prepare their speeches*

BY BRENDEN WEST

Assistant Editor

CLINTON — As with nearly all graduation ceremonies, Clinton High School's Sunday celebration will include hugs and cheers, diplomas obtained and caps thrown. Samantha Burns and Jacob Simpson will be in the middle of it, along with 242 of their classmates. They will join fellow senior Mitch Leonard with speeches for the 2 p.m. event.

All three will speak to axioms they feel embody CHS. Simpson said the crux of his speech pertains to "fighting spirit." "When I was writing my speech, I was thinking about all of the events we have at Clinton High," Simpson said a few hours after finishing his last final this week. He plans to highlight many of the school's athletic and activity accomplishments of late. "How our experiences have led to success. Since it's graduation, we reflect on the past, so I came to thinking about how our fighting spirits have developed throughout high school." Burns, meanwhile, is speaking on loyalty.

"Mine was really inspired by walking around and seeing kids participating for their school, just getting really involved because they're so proud to be part of this school," she said.

Student involvement greatly impacted both high school careers, but they said they arrived to active participation by different paths. Simpson, who is bound for the University of Iowa, described himself as "more introverted" in his freshman and sophomore years. Only after joining student council did he say he found his voice.

For Burns, who will attend Loyola University in Chicago, being involved was always something she wanted to do. She found her way into multiple disciplines — athletics, drama, band, choir and leadership.

**"We reflect on the past, so I came to thinking about how our fighting spirits have developed throughout high school."**

#### **Jacob Simpson**

"I had friends through the things I started being involved in," Burns said. "I was shown how important getting involved was, and just seeing upper classmen achieving so many things, I knew that's what I was working toward." Both students feel as though they're leaving CHS in a good place and consider themselves proud to be a part of what they feel to be an excellent group of students. The Class of 2014 has two National Merit finalists, two NCAA Division-I athletes and four full-ride scholarship recipients among them. These students, Simpson and Burns said, all helped create a positive future for the school.

There's some reluctance to leave, but at the same time both are eager to start their new chapters.

"I'm definitely going to miss the people the most," Simpson said. "I've met so many different personalities and I think that's what's so great about our campus." In the fall, he will embark on obtaining a biology degree.

"Leaving the programs to other people I'm a little nervous," added Burns, who is pursuing a criminal justice and psychology double major. "I've been so involved in all of it that it's weird not to be doing that. Hours and hours." They started on different paths and they are about to undertake different journeys. But both say the value they gained by staying active at CHS is carrying them to further success. Their gratitude for all involved - parents, teachers, faculty - is immense "None of the graduating seniors would be as successful without our mentors," Burns said.



**Soon-to-be Clinton High grads Jacob Simpson, left, and Samantha Burns — both highly active students — shed light on their time at school and what's to come.**

Brenden West/Clinton Herald