



The New Trier News



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Berlind tabbed as commencement speaker

Amanda Berlind proves a standout among 18 applicants and will take the Welsh-Ryan Arena podium on May 31

by Ben Portnoy

One of the crowning achievements for any high school student is to be awarded the honor of keynote speaker at graduation.

At New Trier, the speaker is selected through a rigorous tryout process. Candidates submit their speech to a committee and the committee brings selected students in to present their speech. The keynote speaker is ultimately selected by this committee.

This year's speaker for the class of 2015 is Amanda Berlind.

"I am honored to represent the senior class," said Berlind. "I've had a lot of good memories and the school offers wonderful opportunities, so I thought [being the speaker] would be a great way to end the year."

When Berlind, who will be studying music composition and possibly double majoring in English at New York University, found out she would represent the senior class as the commencement speaker at graduation, she was not allowed to tell anyone.

However, that didn't stop her from celebrating a little.

"I went out into the hallway and then my friend who had been eavesdropping already knew [that I



Berlind, pictured here at home, will take her talents to New York University this fall and study music composition | Facebook

would be the graduation speaker], so we started screaming," said Berlind. "I ran down the hallway and then I think I kicked someone's locker. Someone came by and told us to stop talking."

Needless to say Berlind's reaction definitely had merit.

It is a huge honor to be tasked

with giving a commencement speech. Berlind was selected from a pool of 18 applicants, which was eventually whittled down to eight. Berlind did say she felt some nerves.

"I'm really nervous. I think I'm going to throw up," joked Berlind. "I think I'm good at speaking, I don't know if I'm good at public speaking.

I'm anticipating being nervous. Like three minutes before the speech I'm probably going to go somewhere and freak out or I'm probably just going to run away like one of those runaway brides."

Jokes aside, Berlind is very excited to be giving the speech.

"I'm really excited and the

nerves, luckily, probably won't kick in until right before, when there's no chance for me to get out of it, so no runaway bride situation."

And while nerves may be high, there's lots of anticipation for what Berlind will have to say in her sending off message to the senior class.

Not many students have been able to get much information as to what Berlind has in store for what's expected to be a capacity crowd in Evanston.

"It's a secret," she said. "It's confidential. I want it to be a surprise. I want everyone to say 'I didn't expect that!'"

However, while she wouldn't give any clues as to what her overall message of the speech is, her mixed attitude towards New Trier helps in making any sort of predictions.

"It is true that I bash New Trier a lot," said Berlind. "But I think that New Trier, for all the bad stereotypes, it also is one of the only places in the country that offers this volume of opportunities and they're all incredible."

Students, staff, and family members alike could be in for a treat when Berlind takes the stage on May 31 at Welsh-Ryan Arena.

It's our party and we'll dress up if we want to

For administration, safety is in the best interest. For seniors, celebration is what matters

by Blake Sammann

Any week of school pales when compared to the last week of school for seniors. During their last week of school, Monday through Thursday, seniors come to New Trier dressed up in themes such as USA, Hawaiian, New Trier Spirit, and denim.

On Friday, students are usually dressed in the over-the-top crazy theme. Seniors come to school for advisery, sign yearbooks, and trek to Elder Beach for the traditional end-of-high school cigar.

Along with dressing up, many seniors exhibit mob-like behavior during the last week of school. Clogging the "P" stairwell, "G" stairwell, and a 2nd floor bathroom have been only some of the antics as of late.

These events inconvenience sophomores, juniors, and teachers, who still have to endure school through Jun. 9.

The dilemma New Trier faces is this: how can the last day of school for seniors be fun and memorable while keeping a controlled learning environment for the juniors and sophomores who still have finals in the coming weeks?

Although it is the end of an era for the graduating seniors, celebrating too much could very well cross a line.

In an email sent to all senior parents and advisers, the administration clearly spelled out the behavior and dress they expect from seniors on their last day of high school.

"Students need to dress and behave as they would on a regular school day [for example, no costumes]. Seniors engaging in disruptive behaviors on campus or on the streets bordering the high school will be sent home and will face disciplinary action, including the loss of the privilege to participate in graduation exercises," said the administration in the email.

Another section detailed consequences concerning senior pranks. "Violations of rules can not only keep one from walking at graduation but they will also not be allowed into the graduation party."

According to Scott Williams, Assistant Principal for Student Services, the primary goal of the rules surrounding the last day of school are to keep seniors safe.

For this reason the consequences for violating the rules are severe. The administration wants students to understand that their actions now will not just impact them but their families as well.

"...These types of behaviors will result in the loss of graduation



Clockwise from top left: seniors Ciara Palmer, Amy Meltzer, Kate Klein, McKenna Nard, Melissa Masia, Julia Masia, Emily Carothers, Samantha Bravos, and Claire Egerter, dressed in USA gear on May 18. | Facebook

activities including participation in the graduation ceremony and party, a consequence that can be devastating to entire families."

According to photography teacher and adviser Thomas Lau, the school is in its right to punish students for over-the-top behavior.

"I think that certain behaviors warrant losing certain privileges for acting in a way that is not conducive to the learning environment of all the students here," said Lau. "I don't think that wearing a costume is bad but I think there are kids here who take it way too far."

Some students are not of the same opinion.

When asked about the regulations surrounding the last day of school, senior Robby Hauldren said, "Let the kids be kids. Let the boys play."

Although that is the way that most seniors could view the rules established by the administration, some behaviors can quickly spiral out of control from good spirited fun to degrading or mean.

Lau remembers when there were no regulations in place and students took their freedom too far.

"About seven years ago, which was my first year here, I remember walking into school and seeing seniors after they had been let out standing on the other side of the sidewalk. They were flipping off their teachers and were screaming all sorts of obscenities. To do that to the people that made New Trier's fantastic education possible for four years is selfish and rude," said Lau.

According to Lau, "There are kids who just take it too far."