

Seniors pumped for much awaited grad party

Flashy graduation invitations get mixed reactions among senior class

by Eleanor Kaplan and Alyssa Pak

Seniors are anticipating their graduation party after the distribution of super-sized invitations during advisory.

The party will begin at 10:45 p.m. on June 4 at Northfield.

Students often look forward to the grand raffle near the end of the party. After a few hours of games and dancing, at 4 a.m., graduates make their way to Gilson Beach to take pictures and watch the sunrise.

Senior Amber Malik said she is most looking forward to the prospect of winning prizes at the party. Last year, some of the most note-worthy prizes given away were televisions, plane ticket vouchers, a Vespa, and an autographed Blackhawk hockey stick.

Last year, at every hour they had a smaller raffle, where

prizes such as FitBits, speakers, headphones, small TVs, Keurigs, and gift cards were given away.

"A really memorable moment was when someone got a raffle prize twice. They also gave away a lot of electronics and gift cards," noted 2016 graduate Dylan Schellenberg.

The invitations this year were large white sheets of paper covered with adjectives used to describe the class, ranging from "fluffy" to "invaluable." They caused different reactions among students, some loving them, while others found them wasteful and unoriginal.

Malik said, "I think it is completely unnecessary to spend anything on the invitations. Why do you need an invitation to something you know you are already invited to?"

Making school-wide announcements to inform students about the party would work just as well, Malik suggested.

However, most students were happy to receive such a memorable item, with many opting to have their friends highlight the adjectives that best describe them. Senior Alicia

Kruk said that although some of the words were rather generic, she liked the aesthetic of the invitations and how easy they are to display.

Co-president of the Parent's Association, Bonnie Connors, wrote in an email to the New Trier News that, "This year's invitation reflects the idea that each student is unique, multi-faceted, and much like a 'work of art.'" Each year, a committee of parent volunteers is assembled to design the invitations.

While Connors did not specify the amount of money spent on either the party or the invitations, she noted that it was consistent with the amount from previous years.

Principal Denise Dubravec said that the money for the party is collected by the Parent's Association throughout the class's four years in high school, instead of having graduates pay for a single ticket their senior year.

Regardless of the money spent, community members are onboard with rewarding the graduates for all of their accomplishments. "People in the community support the

party because they want the grads to be able to celebrate their hard work in a safe, fun and inclusive environment," wrote Connors.

Although the theme is kept secret until the night of the party, Connors said that the invitations reflect each year's theme.

Last year, the invitations were given on scrolls, hinting to the theme of Arabian Nights. In 2015, the theme of music festivals was alluded to by the use of lanyards as invites.

While the party is held in the Northfield gym, Connors said that the space is completely transformed and is almost unrecognizable with all the decorations. 2016 graduate Emily Irwin noticed the same. "The gym was decorated really well with colorful wall curtains and decorative seating areas with couches and pillows," she said.

There were live belly dancers and people who were dressed as Arabian Knights, remembered another 2016 graduate, Madeline Hopps. It is evident that the NTPA goes all out for one of the seniors' last nights together.

The entertainment last year

consisted of lots of carnival games, arts and crafts, dancing, and most notably, a performance by the duo Louis the Child, said Schellenberg.

"Louis the Child played at 1 AM and everyone was all together on the dance floor while one of our fellow grads was on stage," said Hopps.

Despite the party lasting until nearly 4 AM, graduates are enthusiastic about staying up all night dancing and spending time with their friends. Most people stay until almost the end of the party, heading home just a little bit early to prepare for going to see the sunrise, said Irwin.

Kruk said that she is most looking forward to the trip to the beach in the morning.

"My friends and I go watch the sunrise a few times each summer, so doing it with a bunch of my delirious classmates should be a good time."

The goal of the Parent's Association for the graduation party is to celebrate the class's achievements and reunite the class once more. Irwin said, "The best part was just being with everyone for one last time."

New Trier veteran takes on role of supt.

A look at New Trier's next supt. Dr. Paul Sally

by Nora Crumley

With his glasses perched on the top of his head, his subtle hand motions and his welcoming voice, Dr. Paul Sally looks like a teacher instead of the Associate Superintendent he is.

Makes sense, as Sally was a math teacher at New Trier for ten years before assuming leadership roles; first as math department coordinator in 2004 and then as Assistant Superintendent in 2009 when he was promoted to his current role.

On July 1, Sally will take over for Dr. Linda Yonke who will be retiring after serving 11 years as New Trier's superintendent.

Sally started at New Trier in 1994, working at the institution in various roles for 23 years. His longevity at New Trier will be an asset as he assumes his new role this coming year.

"One strength that Dr. Sally had is he has been a teacher here, a department chair here, and an assistant sup, so he knows the school very well and his passion for the school and for the students is evident," Assistant Superintendent Dr. Timothy Hayes said.

His familiarity with the Trevians is not his only strength. Winnetka campus principal Denise Dubravec described Dr. Sally's ability to bring people together.

"Paul has interesting qualities; he is personable, he is intellectual, he has a tremendous amount of humor and he is relatable," Dubravec said. "He gets people to want to work with him, not for him."

When asked about his coworker's abilities to lead, Hayes described Sally as a committed learner; an educator who is committed to improvement to looking to ways that make the educational experience better for students.

"He asks very good question and thinks deeply about ideas," Hayes said. "He has this sort of constant curiosity to learn more, to know more."

Sally's curiosity is seen in discussion on future educational



Dr. Paul Sally will replace Dr. Linda Yonke starting Fall 2017 | New Trier

initiatives, and although no radical changes will come with this transfer of leadership, Sally is committed to making the educational experience at New Trier strong, effective and beneficial to current and future students.

"We have done a lot of good work on having our students understand their place in the world, and the place of other people. How do we help prepare student to work with all kinds of different people with different perspectives and backgrounds across oceans and in cultures that may look very different from our own?"

Making student versatile in this ever increasing global world is not Sally's only priority.

He also wants to focus and prioritize student social-emotional health which he sees as a growing concern for New Trier and high schools across the country.

Hayes described Sally's dual approach to education: "Sally has this wonderful balance of understanding the academic and the social-emotional needs of kids and he is able to see how they fit together."

Sally added, "This is all about the students. Certainly the safety and health of our students is our main concern, specifically the growing stress and anxiety our students face."

Sally is adamant in making social-emotional health a pillar in the new strategic plan that he will be creating in alliance with the Board of Education. Dr. Sally described the strategic plan as the "big picture plan."

He explained, "A strategic plan allows an organization to sit back for a moment and make sure that we understand the most important

directions that we are going in, and ensuring that those directions are driving our work and our allocation of resources. It can help us bring together work that is going on in different areas so that we are all working towards similar objectives."

The last strategic plan was formed in 2005 and is unresponsive to the needs of students today.

"If you look at 2005 when that strategic plan went in place and you just think about the technology students are dealing with now compared to 2005 its completely different," Sally said. "Students have different needs and the school needs to respond to the them."

Though the strategic plan will be modified, Sally will continue to balance the tradition of excellence while fostering change and educational progress. "Change is a process that involves all constituency," Sally said.

He continued "There are so many important things that New Trier has developed over the years that were put in place by smart people who had good ideas. When we make change we have to understand why things were put in place and whether those ideas and areas are still important today."

Though maintaining New Trier's academic legacy is a concern for Sally, his main focus is and will always be on the student body.

"My goal, when I start this new position, is to make sure that students know who I am," Sally said.

"I want to make sure they know that I have an open door to listen to students and their concerns."

Yonke passes on role of supt. after 13 years at New Trier

A look back on the work of Supt. Yonke as she wraps up her final year

by Connor Josellis

After 13 years at New Trier, 11 as superintendent, Yonke is handing over the reigns on July 1 to associate Superintendent Dr. Paul Sally. Yonke will work part time to finish up the facilities project until September.

Although the addition of the new wing and the facilities project may be Yonke's most visible accomplishment, a lot of Yonke's actions go unnoticed by the students, like her passion for bringing in teachers.

"She tells us that the most important thing we do as administrators is to find talented teachers for our students. She has been a strong believer in that and in supporting the excellence of our teachers and making sure that when we have openings in our school that we bring excellent teachers into the building," Assistant Supt. for student services Dr. Tim Hayes said.

Yonke has worked in many school districts and was an English teacher before becoming an administrator. She said that some of her proudest moments were working with teachers.

"We worked on a new teacher evaluation system, revising our merit pay system for teachers, and implementing this new requirement that we incorporate student growth into the teacher evaluation."

All three of those are things that no high school has done, even though two of them were requirements by the state. We did them in a way no one else did and I believe we did it better than anybody else," Yonke said.

Although Yonke's tenure has been an era promoting change and challenging ideas, with the facilities project and other institutional improvements, she sometimes struggled with fostering progress while maintaining New Trier's tradition.

She said there could sometimes be a reluctance to change.

"As an institution, we try to change something fundamental like final exams and why do we do

them and what benefit they bring. It's difficult to bring that kind of conversation because there's a feeling that, if we don't do [exams] [students] won't be ready for college. We are also almost limited by our own success [since] kids do so well in college and on test scores; we're doing something right so why would we change," said Yonke.

Acknowledging that it is not a critique of the school she said, "teachers here are innovative, creative, and they do different things all the time."

"A lot of Yonke's actions go unnoticed by the community, like her passion for bringing in teachers."

After she is done working part time to finish up the construction project, Yonke plans to travel to Paris and other parts of Europe, where she jokingly said she will finally take her semester abroad after studying French in high school and college.

Yonke plans to step away from the community after retirement in order to let Sally have his independence.

"I wouldn't necessarily get involved in this community. It is really important for me to step away, and let the new superintendent be in charge, but I can't see myself being entirely out of education."

Yonke said she has always been interested in politics and has a few avenues to follow in those regards but denies any potential run for office, saying she would only be involved in some campaigning.

On the role of superintendent she said, "The most important thing, administratively, that we can do is make sure that great teachers are in the classroom and they are free to teach."

Yonke's successor Dr. Paul Sally, has been associate superintendent for eight years and has worked closely with Yonke for years.

On advice Yonke has for Sally, she said: "Always step back and look at the big picture, you can get so wrapped up in the details."