

Hillsdale Academy President's Report: 2013-2014

The commencement address to the Hillsdale Academy Class of 2014 was delivered on June 1 by Dr. Gary Wolfram, the William E. Simon Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Hillsdale College. Wolfram and his wife, Mary, were among the couples who, in 1990, helped to make Hillsdale Academy a reality. This year their youngest son, Liam, graduated, bringing to a culmination the family's 24 years of commitment to the school. Wolfram's commencement address was a personal, fatherly reflection on college life and all that awaits his son and the other Academy seniors. He encouraged the students to study hard, play hard, and "go to church, even when you doubt, when your professors attack the faith, and even when none of your friends are going." This message was well received by everyone in attendance.

The Hillsdale Academy Class of 2014 included three National Merit competitors and two winners of top honors at the regional high school science fair. These graduates received offers of admission to Hillsdale College, Hope College, the University of Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State, the University of Wisconsin, Pepperdine University, and the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, among many other fine schools. Valedictorian Clayton Thorrez and salutatorian Mallory Erwin reminded the class of its fierce individualism and sometimes quirky personalities; a class that, in the end, leaves behind a tremendous legacy of accomplishment in academics, athletics, drama, music, and art.

Events throughout the school give evidence of another year of good, hard work. Dr. Victor Hanson delivered his annual Academy lecture in October, challenging the 8th-12th graders to seek virtue and wisdom. In the autumn, the Academy held its first Grandparents Day as well as its first annual Veterans Day celebration, led by State Representative Bruce Caswell. The Academy teaching staff was joined in January by a number of charter school teachers and homeschool parents for a day-long writing conference with Dr. Susan Wise Bauer. As a result of this event, the Academy continues to strengthen its writing curricula. In the winter months, the Lower School students were led by their teachers, Mrs. Blood, Mrs. Somerville, and Mr. Falke, to triumph in the local quiz bowl competition, taking three first-place trophies. The Upper School quiz bowl team, led by Latin teacher, Mr. Andrew Holm, won local events and took fifth place at the state competition. Congressman Tim Walberg paid an early spring visit to the 5th-7th grades, offering students important insights on the Affordable Care Act as well as on the situation in the Ukraine. Afterward, Rep. Walberg mentioned that he had never received such insightful questions from middle school children. Jonah Goldberg of National Review Online also visited the Academy, speaking with the juniors and seniors on wide-ranging political issues. Per his usual style, Mr. Goldberg brought a humorous, conservative twist to important questions of the day.

Hillsdale Academy bid farewell to Mrs. Gail Mowry who, over the past ten years, established a strong tradition of music and drama. In the spring, she directed the school's production of *Guys and Dolls*—a show that included nearly all of the Academy's Upper School students. Her final weeks at the Academy were spent assisting in the hiring of her replacement,

Mr. Ross Bonjernour, a long-time member of the Hillsdale County music and theater community. While Gail's joy, good humor, and faith will be missed by all, she is sent off with many good wishes as she and her husband, Pete, welcome their new baby.

On a more somber note, Hillsdale Academy lost two alumni this year: Miss Patricia Owusu, '05, passed away in January, and Mr. Nathan Guzzetta, '10, in June. Both were loved by their classmates and school. They will be missed.

Beyond the walls of Hillsdale Academy, Mrs. Budd's 8th grade class traveled to the autumn Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario, while the entire middle school attended a spring production of *Macbeth* at Hillsdale College. Academy French teacher, Mrs. Christina Pongracic, traveled with her students to France, a trip that included stops in Paris, Versailles, and the beaches of Normandy.

The Hillsdale Academy athletic program continued a tradition of success with over 90 percent of the student body in grades six through twelve competing on school teams. The boys won four Conference Championships in cross-country, golf, soccer, and track and field, while the boys' basketball team won the District Championship for the third time in the past four years. Coach Rick Milligan retired this year from coaching basketball, but not before his team earned 4th place for Class D Team Academic All-State by the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan and received the State's "Top 100" Sportsmanship Award. Coach Neal Brady's soccer team won the Hillsdale County Cup for the fifth straight year. Senior Liam Wolfram was named Male Athlete of the Year for Hillsdale Academy with All-State performances in soccer and track and field. Other All-State performers were Sam Brady, Will Coonradt, and Greg Whalen in the sport of track and field. As for the girls, their teams won the Conference Championship in cross-country and District Championships in basketball and volleyball. The girls also won Regional Championships in golf and volleyball. The Academy girls' track and field team finished sixth at the MITCA Team State Championship. Coach Kevin Reed's basketball team won the annual Dial-A-Ride trophy with their win over Hillsdale High School. Seniors Victoria Heckenlively and Olivia Jones were Co-Female Athletes of the Year. Jones earned All-State status in volleyball, basketball, and track, and Heckenlively finished her career as an eight-event All-State performer in track and field. Other All-State performers were Andrea Jagielski in cross-country and track, Erin Wonders in volleyball, and Taylor Doty, Mallory Erwin, Megan Poole, McKayla Tharp, and Maeve Sullivan in track and field.

Finally, with the help of Academy friends at the Bauervic and Weatherwax Foundations, as well as many other kind donors, Hillsdale Academy experienced another successful year of raising support for scholarships and operating funds. These gifts allowed the Academy to remain active in its local work as well as in its outreach to private and charter schools across the nation. Most recently, our staff has assisted in the establishment of The Classical Academy of Sarasota in Florida, and Veritas Classical Academy in Marietta, Ohio. In May, Headmaster Ken Calvert delivered the commencement address to the first graduating seniors of Oakdale Academy in Waterford, Michigan. These schools, along with the schools of the Barney Charter

School Initiative, continue to look to Hillsdale Academy as a source of inspiration for their local efforts.