

Hillsdale Academy President's Report: 2014-2015

Hillsdale Academy's graduating class included three Eagles Scouts—Noah Kalthoff, Alexander Rush, and Dominic Whalen. Rejecting the status quo of the modern “pop culture,” each of these young men brought to the school strong student leadership as well as a sense of noble duty that reflects the best traditions of Scouting. The Academy's graduating class also included a group of young women and men who distinguished themselves in academic work and athletics, as well as in the school's annual theatrical productions. Seven seniors are heading to Hillsdale College. Among them is Chloe Rijke, who moved with her family from southern California where she was attending the Temecula Preparatory School, one of the earliest charter schools established upon the Hillsdale Academy model. Miss Rijke performed at the highest levels of academic excellence in all of her classes; so much so, that she earned the privilege of giving the annual Latin address at the Academy's commencement ceremony on May 31. Miss Jordan Jacobs, who will attend the University of Michigan, served as the valedictorian of the class of 2015 while Dominic Whalen, who will attend Hillsdale College, gave the salutatory address. The Academy commencement was given even greater significance by the fact that Dr. David Whalen, the father of Dominic and the provost of Hillsdale College, gave the school's commencement address in which he encouraged the students to embrace a true sense of wonder in their studies as well as in their lives. The Academy Class of 2015 departs having served to strengthen the mission of their alma mater.

Throughout the school, the Hillsdale Academy staff and students worked diligently to produce their best efforts. Charlie Waldvogel (8th grade) won the Academy's National Geographic Geography Bee, under the capable supervision of 5th grade teacher Mrs. Karen Somerville. Chloe Tritchka-Stutchell (8th grade) won this year's Edward Everett Prize in Oratory, while members of both the Lower and Upper School were involved with the school musical, *The Music Man*, directed by the Academy's new music teacher, Mr. Ross Bonjernoor. Dominic Whalen (Harold Hill), Claire Calvert (Marion), Collin Hubbard (Mayor Shinn), Maria McElroy (Eulalie Mackechnie Shinn), and Jay Jenkins (Winthrop Paroo), among 75 other Academy students, delighted audiences in the packed Sauk Theatre in Jonesville, Michigan. In each of the Academy's classrooms, students tackled with gusto their lessons in mathematics, grammar, French, Latin, literature, history, science, art, and music. Academy students again placed among the top five percent of all students (national and Michigan) in the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the Advanced Placement Exams, and the ACT college entrance exam. Placing an exclamation point on the year was teacher Chris Heckel's completion of his Ph.D. in biology at the University of Pittsburgh. His is the fourth doctorate earned by members of the Academy teaching staff. The Academy's focus on classical foundations continues to produce excellent results.

This year Hillsdale Academy played host to a number of important College events. While the new Searle Center is under construction, the Academy has served as the site for the annual

Hillsdale College Christmas banquet, the Hillsdale College Honors Assembly, and the MHSAA Scholar Athlete dinner. The school's annual "Italian Feast" helped to raise funds for the biennial junior and senior trip to Greece and Italy. This trip took place in early April and included visits to Athens, Delphi, Pompeii, Rome, Florence and Venice. The junior and senior classes, along with 20 parents, enjoyed tours of many famous archaeological sites, museums, churches, and gelato shops. In addition to these events, teachers and students received lectures from visiting scholars. On January 23, the Academy faculty was led by Dr. Dan Coupland of the Hillsdale College Education Department and the Academy's own Dr. Ellen Condict in a study, review, and discussion of grammar and writing. This work is an extension of the writing and grammar presentation by Dr. Susan Wise Bauer in January 2014. Before their trip to Greece and Italy, Academy students and families heard lectures from Dr. Joseph Garnjobst, Classics Department chairman at Hillsdale College, as well as Dr. Gregory Athnos, emeritus professor of music at North Park University. Dr. Garnjobst and Dr. Athnos prepared the students for the many ancient, medieval and Renaissance sites they would visit while on their excursion. Dr. Victor Davis Hanson of the Hoover Institute spoke on current political affairs during his annual autumn visit, while Mr. Kevin Williamson, a guest lecturer with the Dow Journalism Program at Hillsdale College and director of the William F. Buckley Jr. Fellowship in Political Journalism at the National Review Institute, spoke to the Upper School on his life as a roving reporter. John Miller, director of the Dow Journalism Program, was instrumental in making this visit a reality.

The Hillsdale Academy athletic program continued great success with outstanding team and individual achievements over the course of the 2014-2015 year. Ninety-five percent of students in grades 6-12 competed in the athletic program. All Colt teams competed at a high level and finished at or near the top in conference play. The year was highlighted by three conference championships and two district titles to add to the tradition of post-season success at Hillsdale Academy.

The girls' varsity cross-country team led by Coach Michael Nikkila won the SCAA Conference Championship and qualified as a team for the state finals. Sophomore Andrea Jagielski earned All-State recognition for the second year in a row. The girls' basketball team won the District Championship for the fourth year in a row and was named in "The Top 100" for sportsmanship across the state of Michigan. Ten members of the girls' track and field team qualified for the MHSAA state finals. The 3200-meter relay team of Jagielski, Claire Calvert, Taylor Doty, and Megan Poole earned All-State honors. Calvert also had the honor of singing the national anthem for the Division 4 State Finals Track Meet. Finally, Kendra Lantis was named Hillsdale Academy's Female Athlete of the Year. Kendra was a senior captain and all-conference in volleyball, basketball, and track and field. Kendra, along with her twin sister Kelsey, graduated in June, marking an end to an accomplished 13-year run of Lantis student-athletes at Hillsdale Academy.

The boys' varsity teams won SCAA conference titles in cross-country and track and field. The boys' cross-country team also qualified for MHSAA state finals, and the 3200-meter relay of Greg Whalen, Michael Craig, Connor Oakley, and Sam Brady earned All-State recognition in track and field. The varsity boys' soccer team won the Hillsdale County Soccer Cup for the sixth year in a row, and senior Franklin Tropiano earned All-State recognition. The varsity boys' basketball team under new head coach Tim Wells won the district championship and won the Rotary Holiday Tournament for the first time in school history. Noah Kalthoff earned All-State honors and will continue his basketball career playing for the Chargers and Coach John Tharp next year. Kalthoff was named Senior Athlete of the Year for Hillsdale Academy.

Also among the many activities at Hillsdale Academy this year was its continuing work with the Liberal Arts Teacher Apprenticeship via the Education Department at Hillsdale College. Fifteen Hillsdale College students apprenticed with the Hillsdale Academy Lower and Upper School teaching staff. In the autumn, ten new apprentices will join the ranks of those who have worked at the school. Through the years, these apprentices have regularly received numerous job offers from private as well as public charter schools. This fall, in coordination with the Van Andel Graduate School of Statesmanship at Hillsdale College, the Hillsdale Academy teaching and administrative staff will begin working with graduate students interested in school administration. Kyle Murnen and Nathaniel Pullman have been selected as the first to be trained in the new Administrative Apprenticeship program. These efforts to train teachers and administrators coincide nicely with the Academy's continued work in support of private schools across the nation as well as in support of the Barney Charter School Initiative.

Finally, a number of events through the year contributed to the Academy's successful and growing fundraising efforts. On Grandparents Day (September 26) the school hosted nearly 100 proud grandparents, while the Academy Annual Fund dinner at Johnny T's Bistro on November 14 attracted 160 supporters of the school for dinner, conversation, and a rousing speech by Hillsdale College Professor of Law Bob Blackstock. This October, the Hillsdale Academy community, with friends and supporters, will celebrate the school's 25th anniversary and look ahead to many more years of good, hard work.