Nease VERTICAL

Senior Issue
Class of 2026

THE JOURNEY ENDS HERE

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The Four Years That Shaped the Class of 2026

By: Brooke Strickland

When the Class of 2026 walked into Nease, BeReal was the app everyone was downloading and nobody really understood. Now they're walking out into a world reshaped by AI, a new principal, two Taylor Swift albums, and one very infamous Oscar slap. A lot can change in four years.

Senior Isabella Mills says, “I changed a lot during high school, especially from sophomore to junior year.” In addition to our seniors changing and growing, Nease did too. In the 2024 school year (our seniors' junior year), Ms. Kunze retired and Ms. Fonseca became the new principal. Isabella notes that during this change, Ms. Fonseca put emphasis on school spirit and Friday Night Lights. As a cheerleader during these games, Isabella states her favorite memory was rushing the field when we beat PV.

Across campus, we also saw a succession in fashion and slang. From “preppy” Lululemon outfits, from “rizz” to “demure,” and Parke sweatshirts, our seniors have seen a lot. Isabella also remarked on the recent trend at Nease of wearing flip flops and sandles. She claimed that in her “Freshman or sophomore year, you would've been bullied for having you toes out,” which sums up the development of our students and how it affected their fashion choices.

Pop culture events also impacted the Class of 2026. In 2022, students buzzed about the slap by Will Smith at the Oscars, Queen Elizabeth passed away, Taylor Swifts Midnights album was all the rage, and BeReal became a staple social media platform. Mills says, “The slap was crazy, I remember everyone talking about it at school.”

In 2023, the Barbie x Oppenheimer crossover blew up across the nation, Rhianna’s Super Bowl performance was going viral, A.I. was slowly creeping in to our daily lives, and Taylor Swifts eras tour dominated the music industry.

2024 brought us Brat Summer, the feud between Kendrick Lamar and Drake, and the viral Love Island season 6. 2025 had us enthralled in the CEO “Kiss Cam” cheating scandal, the Louvre heist, and Katy Perry’s trip to space.

While 2026 has not yet complete, it's already pulling its weight. *Sinners* dominated the Oscars with a record-breaking 16 nominations. BTS announced their first world tour since completing mandatory military service and the internet collectively lost its mind. AI has gone from "slowly creeping in" to basically being enrolled at Nease. For the Class of 2026, the timeline doesn't stop at graduation...if anything, it's just getting started.



Photo Credit: Vertical Staff Photographer

Behind the Scenes

By: Aiva Mann

Senior Sponsor Spotlight

Behind the scenes of your senior year, two Nease faculty members were working to make the last year at Nease for the Class of 2026 a memorable experience. These guides help navigate your senior year, from ordering your cap & gown to the pancake breakfast during the last week for seniors. Details you probably didn't even know to think about like the printing of graduation tickets and programs, reserving Grad Bash buses, running graduation rehearsal, and coordinating many, many events takes countless hours in addition to their teaching responsibilities. Making sure everything ran smoothly for the Class of 2026 was a lot of work, but Ms. Mietzner and Ms. Morrison, who are serving as senior sponsors for their third year, have it down to a science.

Mrs. Mietzner shares that she loves working with seniors because, "As a teacher, I love seeing them grow into young adults ready to take on the next chapter in their lives." Teaching for almost 19 years, Mrs. Mietzner has seen many students navigate stressful times. She explains, "I try to provide students with the resources they need to be prepared to hopefully help reduce some of the stress. I also work on coping skills and strategies to help them stay calm during this time." To close out this year she advises seniors that "Success isn't just about how well you do something, it's about how much you grow while doing it."

Ms. Morrison says she especially likes working with seniors because, "I like being able to make their last year at Nease the best one, because I think they deserve that, and it's an opportunity for them to have a last hurrah with all their friends and teachers."



Senior Sponsors Ms. Mietzner and Ms. Morrison at Grad Bash 2026
Photo Credit: Ms. Mietzner

One way she ensures it's their best is by focusing on arranging the highly anticipated senior events such as Grad Bash and prom. However, planning these is no easy feat, she explains, "We start planning for the next year right about now. So, even though we're not done planning things like graduation and senior events, we are already focused on next year."

When asked, Ms. Morrison offered simple piece of advice that should not be looked over; she stresses, "call your mom. Please call your mom. She will miss you so much when you're away at college."

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Congratulations to our 2026 Graduates! (bolded names)

Permission to Proceed

After four years all-in at Nease, Audrey Jovel sets sail for the Coast Guard Academy

By: Kate De La Torre

Three days. That's how long Audrey Jovel had to learn an eight-minute choreographed drill routine after a teammate couldn't return from vacation in time to compete. Her team took first place. Nease won the overall meet.

That story, according to Chief Warrant Officer Michael Donato, is Audrey Jovel in a nutshell.

Jovel, a Class of 2026 senior and four-year NJROTC cadet at Nease, has earned an appointment to the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. The Coast Guard Academy is one of the most selective military institutions in the country. An appointment is the official offer of admission to a U.S. military academy. Fewer than 9% of graduating seniors nationwide are accepted to service academies.

It is an achievement that surprised no one who watched her move through the Nease NJROTC program. In 2024, Jovel was named Honor Cadet and earned the Iron Woman designation at the Area 8, 9 & 10 Leadership Academy, a competitive regional training program drawing nearly 300 cadets from 67 high schools across Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. She also served as a platoon commander during the training. This spring, she competed alongside her teammates at the NJROTC Drill National Championship.

"I met Audrey as a freshman," Chief Warrant Officer Michael Donato said. "Even back then she stood out amongst her peers as someone who was strong willed and a natural leader. Her competitive drive was obvious — she wanted to excel in everything she touched and pushed herself to be the best."

Donato pointed to the last-minute drill routine as the moment that captured her character. "We had a cadet who couldn't make it back from vacation to compete in a drill meet," he said. "Audrey took it upon herself to learn an eight-minute choreographed routine in only three days. Because of her efforts we went on to take first place in that event and win the overall meet."

For Jovel, the program was more than competition. "NJROTC has definitely had a huge impact on my life because of the real-world skills I have learned like communication, discipline, and determination," she said. "These programs provided amazing guidance in helping me figure out what my interests are and giving me an honest insight of what I could be doing as a career."



Audrey Jovel signing with the Coast Guard Academy

Jovel's appointment caps a remarkable four years in one of the nation's top NJROTC programs. This spring, Nease finished 3rd overall at the NJROTC Drill National Championship competing against just 23 teams that qualified out of more than 630 units nationwide. The program has also claimed the Area 10 drill championship for 12 consecutive years.

Donato said he hopes Jovel's example stays with the cadets she leaves behind. "I hope current and future cadets learn the power of leading by example, just as Audrey consistently did," he said. "She was humble and kind in her interactions, yet fiercely competitive when it came to performance and personal standards. That balance — quiet humility paired with an unrelenting drive to excel — is rare, and it's what made her such an effective leader. Audrey showed her peers that you don't have to be the loudest voice to set the tone; you set it through your actions, your work ethic, and the way you treat others. If cadets take anything from her, I hope it's that true leadership is lived, not declared."

*Photos provided by NJROTC



Nease NJROTC Instructors with Jovel

College-Committed Nease Athletes

By: Sophia Hayes

In the United States, it is estimated that 8.26 million high school students participate in high school sports. With so many students participating in high school athletics, the chances of playing a varsity sport in college are rare. Yet, for the Class of 2026, a whopping 17 athletes from Nease High School are committed to a college athletic program. Nease's abundance of college committed athletes highlights the perseverance and dedication of the students, coaches, and athletic department who have made their dreams come true despite the statistics.

One of those athletes is Avery Alicea, who will be running track and field at Jacksonville University. When asked about what she felt helped her most during her recruiting journey, Avery said, "The visits really helped me choose the best fit for me because I was able to meet girls on the team and see the facilities." For many athletes, visiting schools is a good way to gain exposure, connect with potential teammates, and set the stage for future opportunities. Avery's journey showcases how pivotal those visits can be for making a college decision.

For Alex Davis, who is set to play baseball at Lackawanna College, talking to coaches helped him navigate which college to commit to. Alex said that "Once I got talking with Coach McCarry, [I heard] exactly what I wanted out of a coach." Building a connection with the coach really helped Alex make the decision to move hours away to continue his athletic journey. With Alex's strong connection with the program already, he is ready to embrace the challenges ahead and make the most of his collegiate career.

The commitment to play at the college level is no small feat. From juggling academics and rigorous training schedules to maintaining academic excellence, these athletes have put in years of effort. The Class of 2026 is sending off a strong group of athletes who embrace difficulties, thrive off determination, and push the limits always. Their dedication is proof that with hard work and persistence it is possible to beat the statistics and achieve something special.

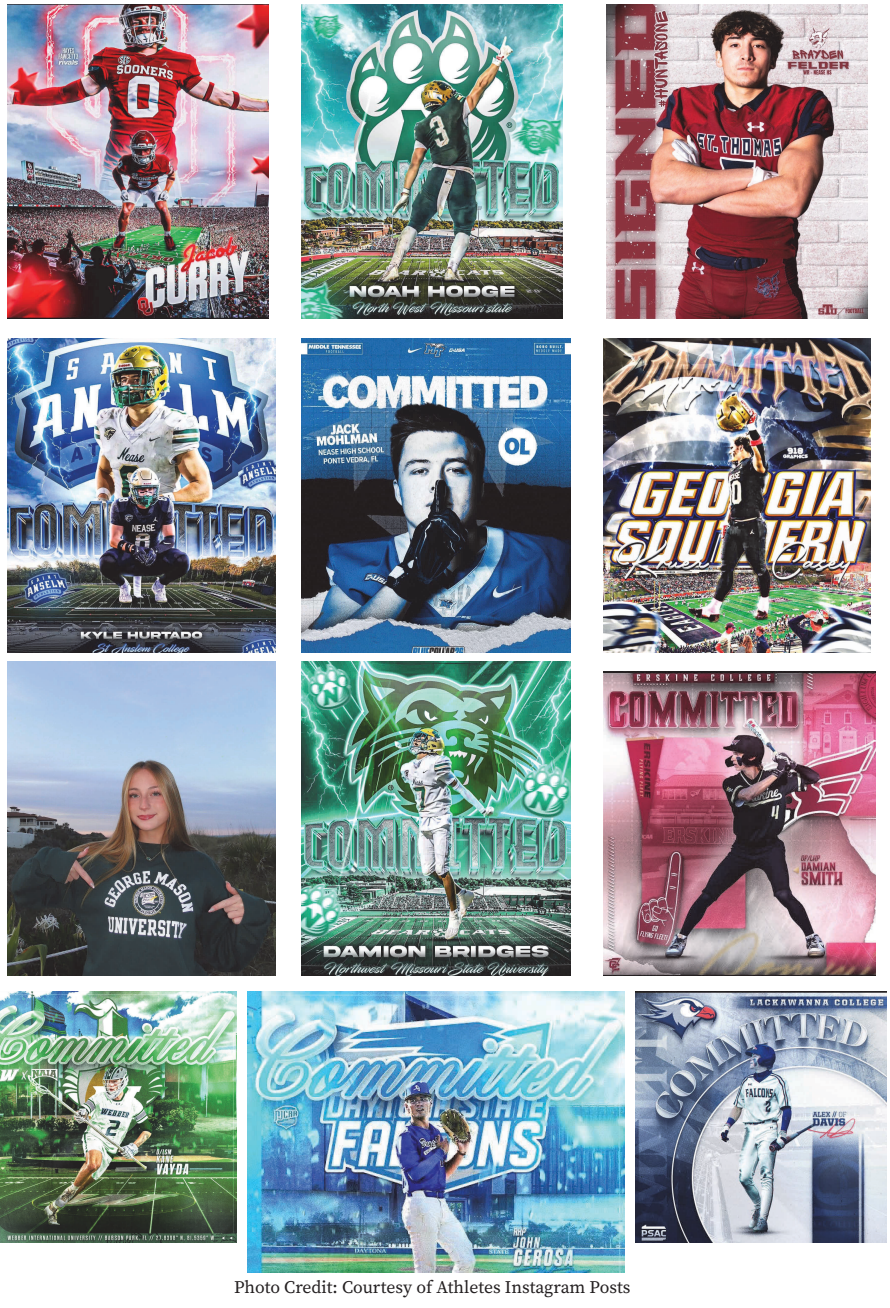


Photo Credit: Courtesy of Athletes Instagram Posts

Committed Athletes:

Pictured: Jacob Curry at the University of Oklahoma, Noah Hodge at Northwest Missouri State University, Brayden Felder at St. Thomas University, Kyle Hurtado at Saint Anslem College, Jack Mohlman at Middle Tennessee University, Kruer Casey at Georgia Southern, Selena Gregory at George Mason, Damion Bridges at Northwest Missouri State University, Damian Smith at Erskine College, Kane Vayda at Webber International University, John Gerosa at Daytona State College, Alex Davis at Lackawanna College
Not Pictured Avery Alicea at Jacksonville University, Kai Ryan at the University of Alabama, , Brendan Cart at Barry University, , Caeden Dye at Brewton Parker College, Jack Greer at New College of Florida

The Last Summer...

By: Jenna Reinstine

As the school year comes to an end, many high school seniors are thinking about how they want to spend their final summer before going into adulthood. After years of classes, homework, or busy schedules, this summer represents one last opportunity to relax, have fun, and spend time with friends and family before moving on to the next stage of life.

One popular activity among seniors is taking short trips with friends. Whether it's a beach day, a road trip to the mountains, or visiting nearby cities down the peninsula, these small adventures can help students celebrate the end of high school. After spending years together in classrooms, many seniors want to make the most of their remaining time with the people who have been apart of their high school journey.

Senior Adah Lisk said spending time with friends has been is her main goal this summer. 'We've been trying to hang out as much as possible before we go to college,' she said. Adah also said, 'We're planning to do many beach days at Micklers and a weekend road trip to Miami over the summer because we know the summer will go by fast."

Another meaningful way seniors can spend their summer is by trying something new. With fewer school responsibilities, students have more time to explore hobbies or interests they didn't have time for during the school year. Some seniors take up photography, cooking, painting or playing an instrument. Others enjoy outdoor activities like hiking, swimming, or biking around their neighborhoods.

Senior Avery Alicea said trying new activities will make her final summer before graduation more exciting. She said," I am going to spend more time outside and try things I normally wouldn't do during the school year,"Avery said. She also said," It's going to be nice to have a chance to relax and enjoy new experiences before everything changes."

Spending time with family also is especially meaningful during this last summer before college. As seniors prepare for college or new opportunities, they often realize their routines may soon change. Family dinners, vacations, and simple activities like movie nights or backyard barbecues become important ways to enjoy time together before life becomes busier.

Senior Audrey Rech said she has been focusing on spending more time with her family this summer. "My family and I have been doing a lot together, like cooking dinner, going on small trips, and watching movies, since I will be leaving for college soon, it feels extra important to enjoy this time with them." Rech said.

As graduation gets closer, many seniors feel both excited and nostalgic. The final months of high school are full of important milestones and the last summer is the final stretch before a major change. For now, seniors are making the most of their last summer by enjoying the time with people who made their high school years unforgettable.

Senior Sunrise



Adah Lisk & Lillian Weiss



Layla Knight, Scarlet Patch, Blair Murray, Adah Lisk , & Selena Gregory



Avery Alicea & Adah Lisk



Madison Sole & Audrey Rech

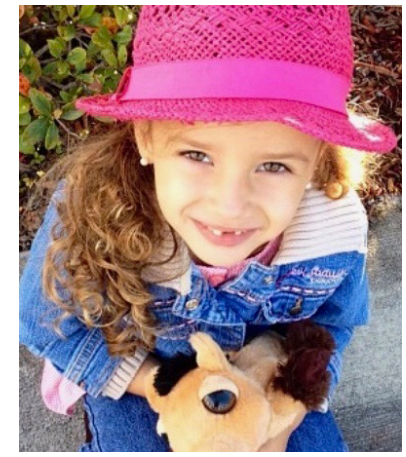


Lillian Weiss & Audrey Rech

Class of 2026: Then and Now



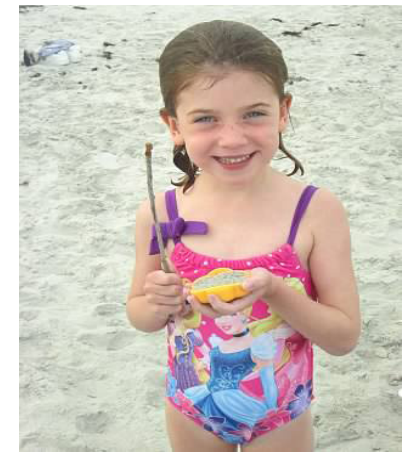

Adah Lisk



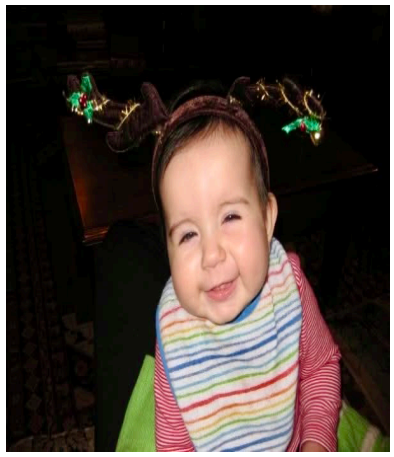

Avery Alicea



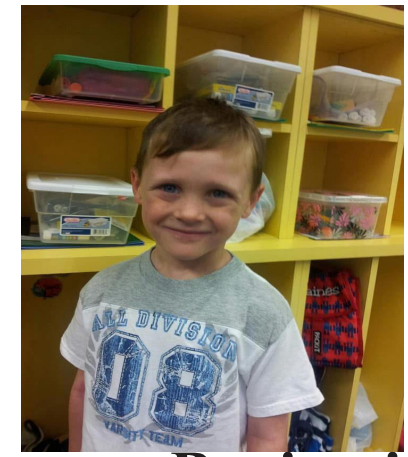
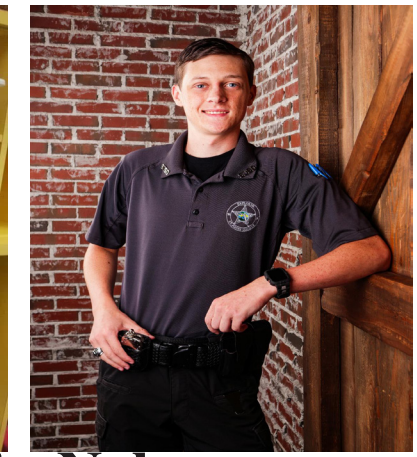

Aiden-Kai McGreevy



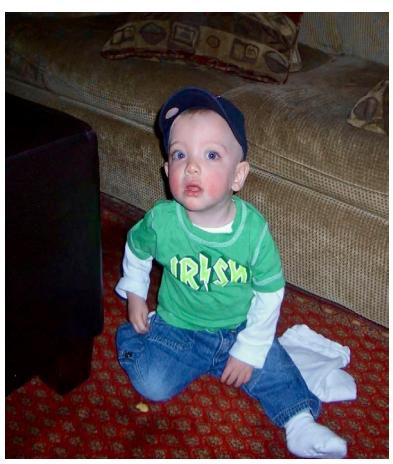

Avery Oxford



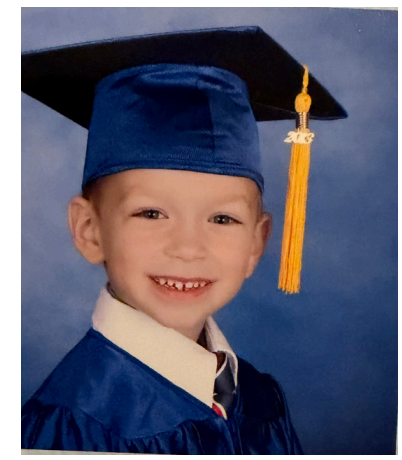

Alden Arcement

Benjamin Nelson




Alex Cantwell

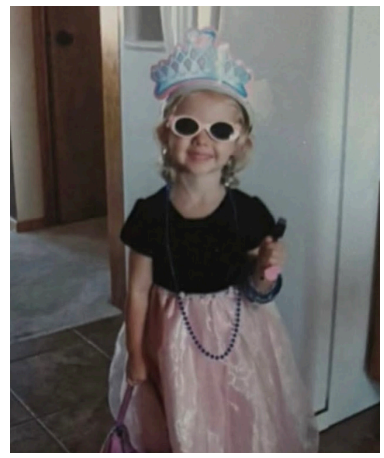



Brady Gamber

Class of 2026: Then and Now



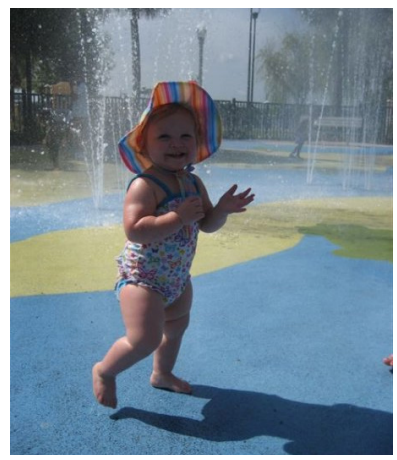
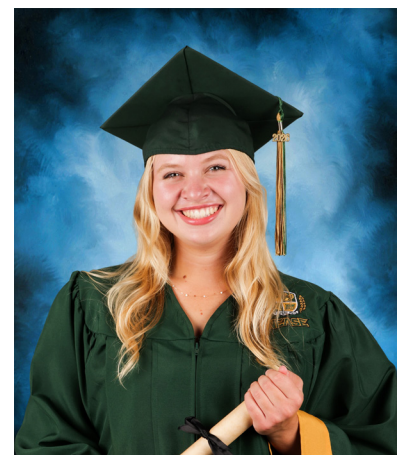

Brendan Patricolo




Ellie Lale



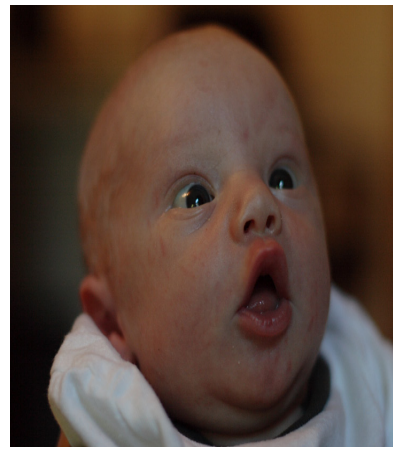

Casey Eliason

Emily Mitchell



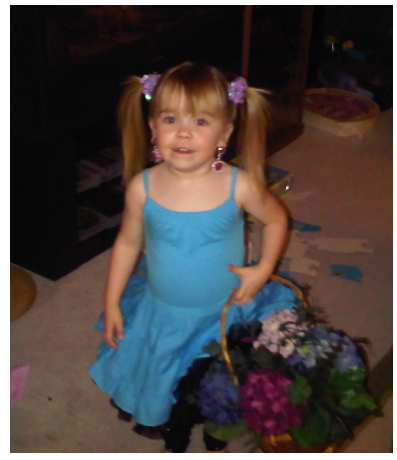
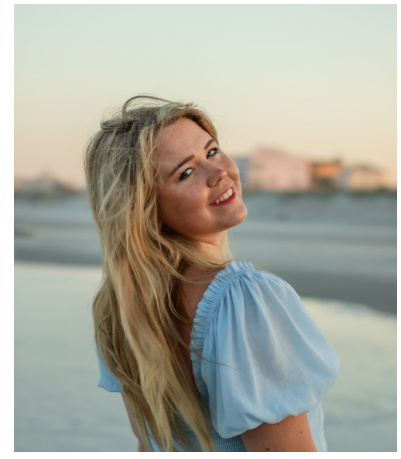

Charlotte Rennie




Ferris Drake




Daniel Kuckel

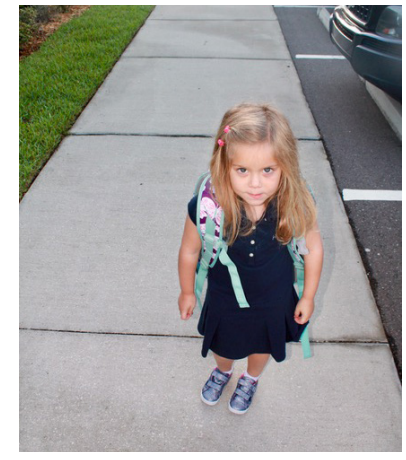



Freya Klockare

Class of 2026: Then and Now



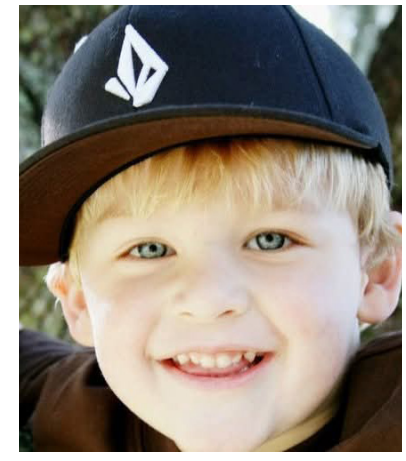
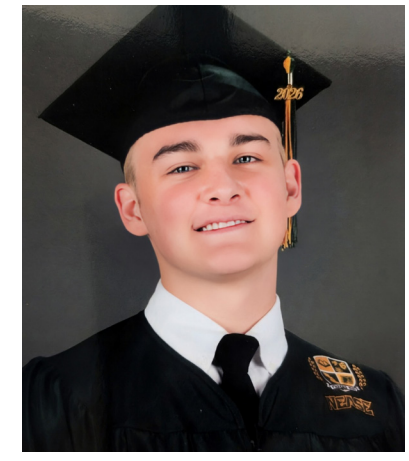

Gharam Amun




Harper Gardner



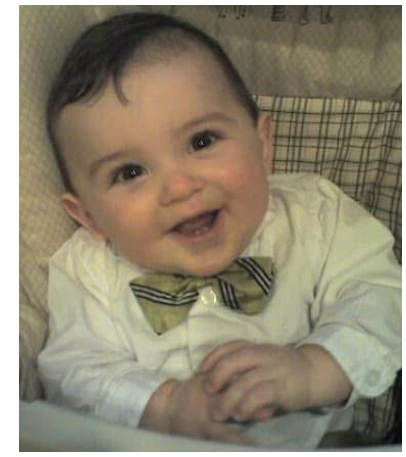
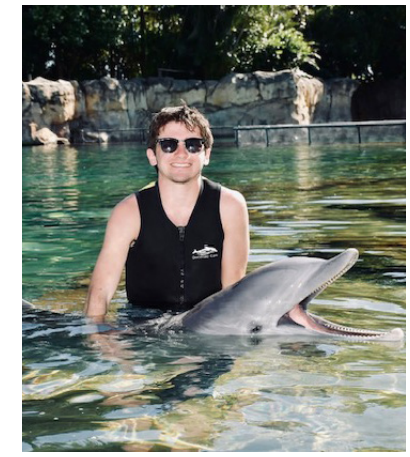

Giselle Scigliano

Hunter Chase




Grady Smith

Jackson Mollo





Hannah Shaver

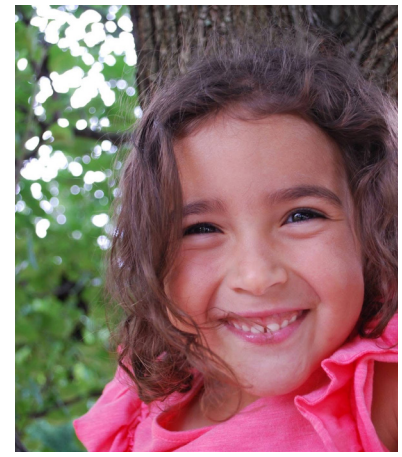



John Gerosa

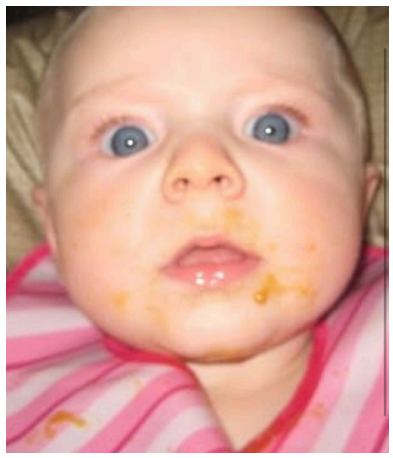
Class of 2026: Then and Now




Jordan Christopher




Kate De La Torre




Juliet Victorian




Katy Vega




Kai Ryan




Kaylie Dollard




Kalani Wyman




Kenzie Eskuche

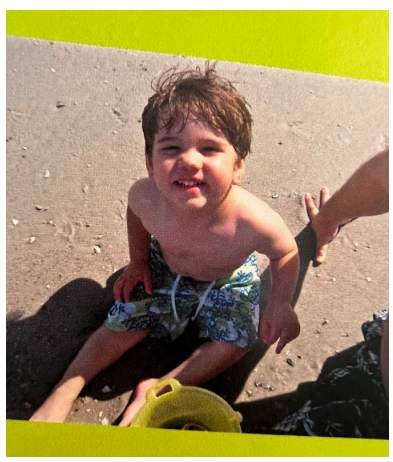
Class of 2026: Then and Now



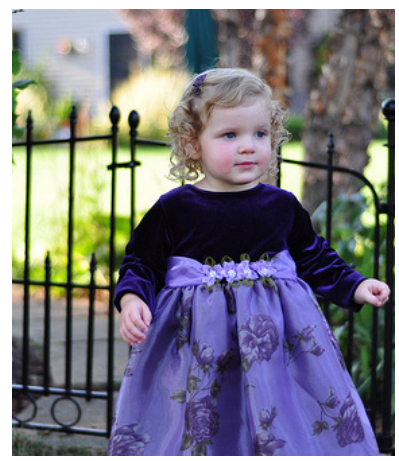

Kianna Lucken




Lily Craig



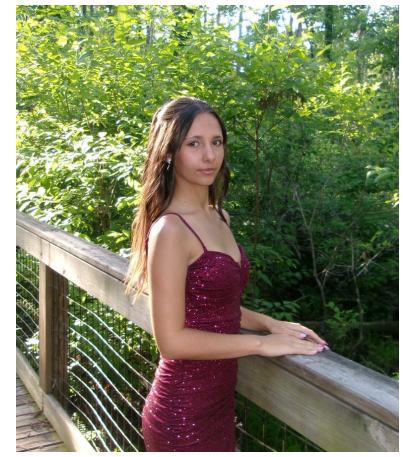

Kyle Hurtado



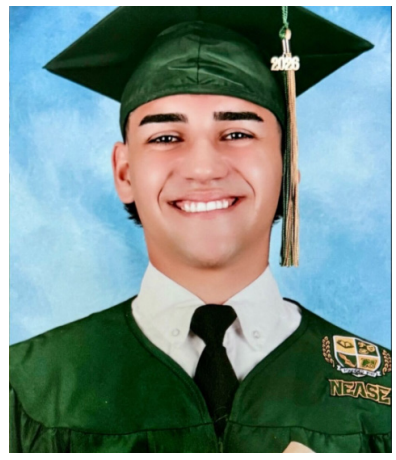

Lindsay Cox



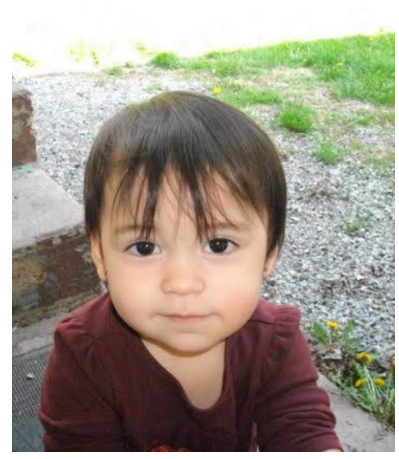

Layla Knight

Mackenzie Cole

Liam Madden




Madison Isabella

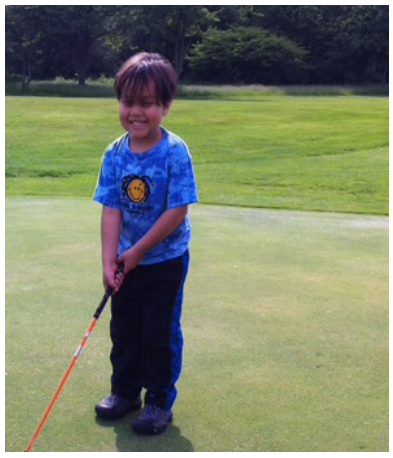
Class of 2026: Then and Now



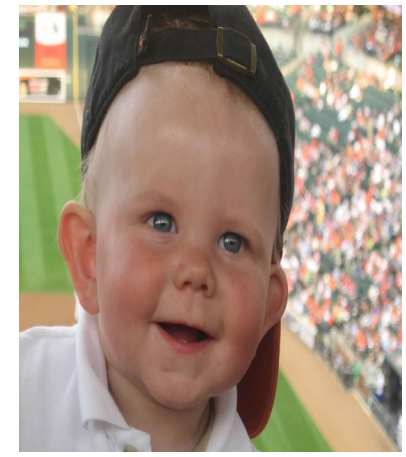
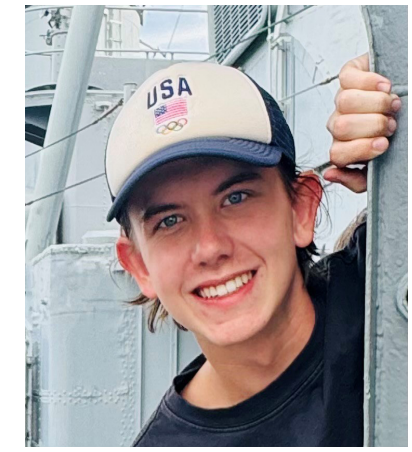

Malana Patel




Pablo Solis



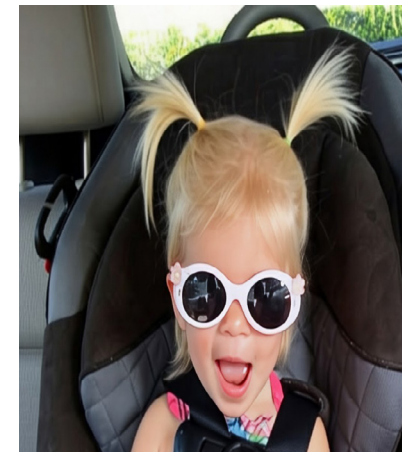

Manny Harken

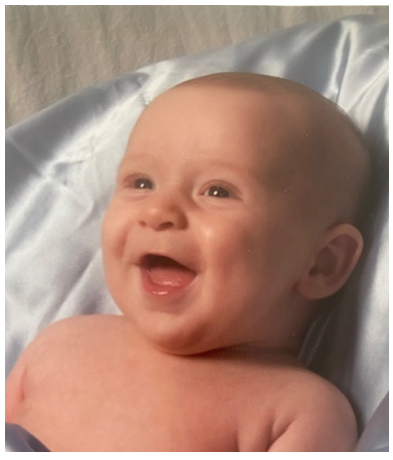
Paxton Beidle




Nicholas Romero




Petra Danksworth




Noah Hodge




Peyton Ebbecke

Class of 2026: Then and Now




Quinn Walsh



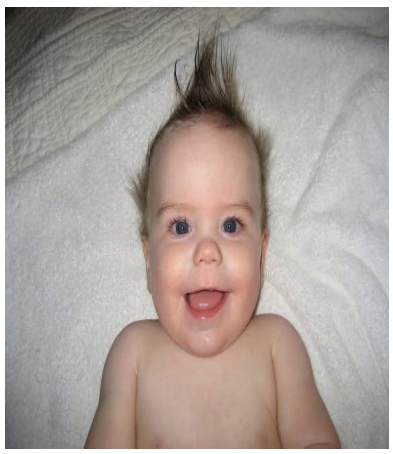
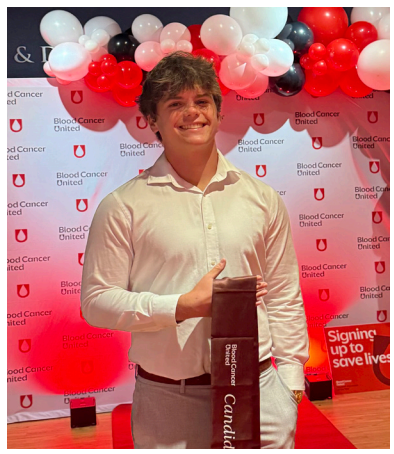

Sanjana Kamalraj



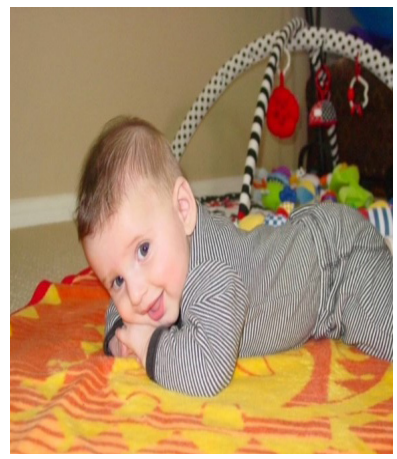

Rocky Turner



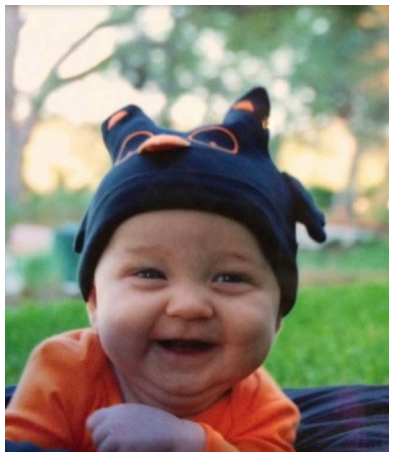

Selena Gregory

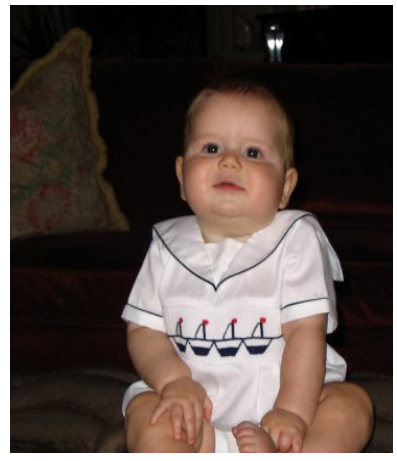
Ryan Wills




Shane Crist




Sam Taylor

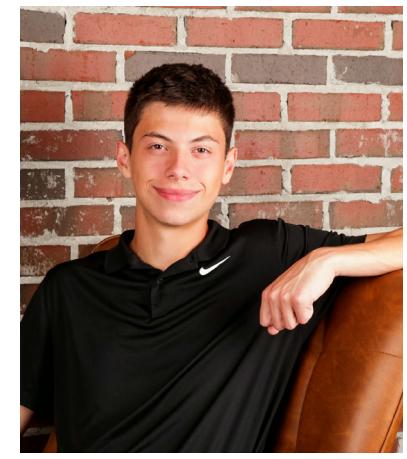



Shane Omahen

Class of 2026: Then and Now




Srikruti Venkat

Tyler Labardee




Sydney Leal




Waylon Motes




Brady Michaux



Happy Graduation!



WISHING ALL OUR WONDERFUL ACADEMY OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SENIORS A HAPPY GRADUATION AND THE BEST OF LUCK IN ALL YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS. IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE TO BE YOUR TEACHER THESE PAST FOUR YEARS. I AM SO PROUD OF EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU AND I CANNOT WAIT TO SEE ALL THE GREAT THINGS YOU WILL DO OUT IN THE WORLD. I LOVE YOU ALL SO MUCH!

Mrs. Amato

HOUSE ROYALS



Prom King, Reid Foster, receives his crown

Photo Credit: Vertical Staff Photographer



Prom Queen, Selena Gregory, celebrates on her throne

Photo Credit: Vertical Staff Photographer

The 2026 Prom King & Queen Hit the Jackpot