

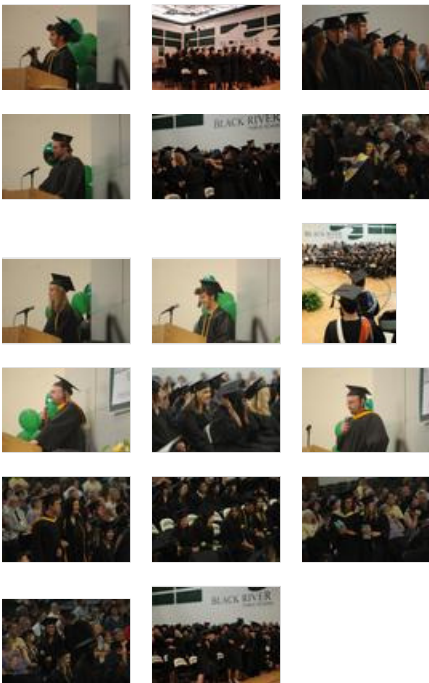
School and seniors have milestone night

Graduating class most Black River-educated of all



Dennis R.J. Geppert/The Holland Sentinel
 Black River graduates pop confetti during their commencement ceremony Friday night at Black River.

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By **STEPHEN KLOOSTERMAN**

The Holland Sentinel
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Holland, MI — Black River Public School reached yet another milestone in its development with Friday night's graduation ceremony.

The class of 2009 is more Black River-educated than any previous class, having attended at the high school, junior high, and elementary level, Black River Head of School Shannon Brunink said during the ceremony. The event also was Brunink's first as administrator.

Friday's graduates started at Black River as fifth-graders in 2001, Brunink said.

The school has operated for 13 years, but added grades step by step. It took children in sixth through eighth grades when it opened in 1996, and it celebrated its first high school graduation in 2000. Black River later added grades four and five in the fall of 2001 and opened class for first through third grades in the fall of 2004.

"As you move on from Black River to college and life, keep in touch," said board member Robert Sligh. "We're proud of you."

Student and faculty speakers waxed thoughtful about the students' futures.

Science teacher Tim Ewald compared their college plans to his own 11-year quest to finish his master's degree, listing all of the unexpected things — good and bad — that put off him finishing the degree on time.

"I had no idea any of this could happen," Ewald said. "Anything can happen, but you can thrive, and remember that every now and again."

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Art teacher Peter Middleton spoke about the love of learning and made a distinction between studying in order to achieve a college degree and being curious in order develop one's own character.

"The bureaucracy of academics and so on may be the tools that will serve you well in life," Middleton said. "They may not serve the needs of the soul."

Student Aaron Parach gave a speech describing his first impressions of his classmates upon joining Black River.

"I had never seen a group of kids so collectively motivated to achieve," he said. "While some students go to college to find this attitude, we already have that."

Class salutatorian Sarah Smith compared school changes to putting on a new pair of shoes that are uncomfortable at first.

"Neither life nor high school were meant to be experienced without pain," she said.

Valedictorian Jennifer Dalton acknowledged the work of teachers and parents, and she spoke about the students' transition into adulthood.

"Tonight is the beginning of how we choose to impact the world," she said. "From their guidance, we are able to step out."

Black River Public School Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Black River Public School has announced its valedictorian and salutatorian for the class of 2009.

Jennifer Dalton, daughter of Clarence and Nadine Dalton of Hamilton, will graduate as valedictorian. She has a 4.20 grade point average and is actively involved in many school activities. Dalton has been a member of the Black River Orchestra and has competed in several solo and ensemble competitions as well as orchestra festival at both the district and state level. She has also been a member of the Holland Area Youth Orchestra. She is an active member of her church youth group and is a member of the National Honor Society. The College Board recognized her this year as an "AP Scholar with Honors." Jenn will be attending the University of Michigan to study pre-med in the fall where she has been accepted into the Honors College.

Sarah Smith, daughter of Dr. Lawrence and Marti Smith of West Olive, will graduate as salutatorian. Smith is active in school organizations including orchestra and is a member of the National Honor Society. Smith graduates with a grade point average of 4.20, and an ACT score of 30. The College Board recognized her this year as an "AP Scholar with Honors." In the fall, Sarah will be attending the University of Michigan to study English and education.

Graduation at Black River Public School is 7 p.m. on Friday, June 5, in the school gymnasium at 491 Columbia Avenue in Holland.

Black River Public School Graduates

The Black River Public School class of 2009 comprises 48 students, 46 of whom have been accepted to a college, university, or continuing educational program. The members of this class are:

- Sarah Allis
- Brittany Anderson
- Amber Beacham
- Charles Beacham
- Chloe Beighley
- Cody Boomgaard
- Timothy Bradfield
- Jessica Carroll
- Jennifer Dalton
- Cabrey Daniel
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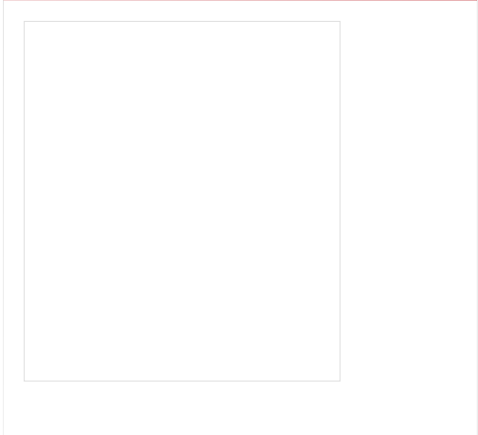
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