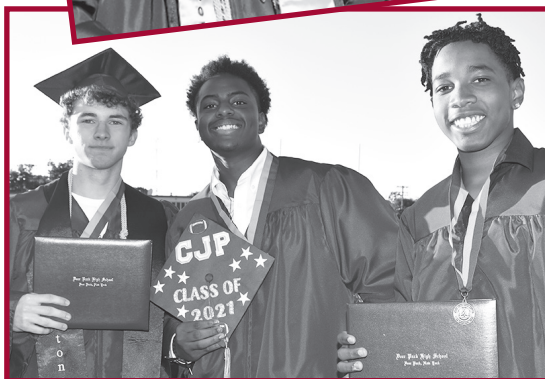


# The STANDARD

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEER PARK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

## A DAY OF PRIDE AND POTENTIAL FOR THE *Class of 2021*



After a long school year filled with change and confusion, Deer Park High School's dream of a single graduation ceremony with the entire Class of 2021 became a happy reality on June 24 as the seniors filed on to the football field under beautifully sunny skies to begin the school's 58th commencement.

"The most important thing to note is that we managed to continue on the path life gave us," said Senior Class President Taylor Korsiak, reflecting on the uncertainty the seniors experienced due to the last year's COVID-19 pandemic. "Each and every one of you should be extremely proud of yourself for completing your education during this pandemic. Take the drive and ambition that you maintained this year with you throughout all of life's hardships."

"This evening, we are doing something felt to be impossible a year ago," said salutatorian Matthew Heinen. "We are returning to normal life and celebrating a normal graduation. Throughout all the dark times we have all faced, we have not let them stop us. It would have been easy to accept the circumstances we are in, but we always tried to make the best of it. Whether it be in school and learning while sitting behind the screen, performing our daily lives while wearing a mask or just staying at home in order to prevent the spread of the virus, we have always adapted."

In her address, valedictorian Jasleen Kaur extolled the power and value of curiosity and vulnerability.

"Be curious," Kaur told her fellow graduates. "Never stop questioning the world around you. Curiosity is the catalyst of change. It is the act of constantly contemplating the

structures and fabric of our reality that sparks something beautiful in all of us: awareness of the wonders of this world and the hardships that plague it. Vulnerability is having the courage to make the bold sacrifices and choices that open one's heart to pain, only in the hopes of breeding love, innovation and change. It is that childish optimism, inquisitiveness, empathy and resilience that unlocks the possibility of a better future."

Superintendent James Cummings touched on all that was lost and sacrificed during the prior 15 months before accentuating the many positives of the day. "Despite what we've all lost and missed out on, we managed to persevere," Cummings said. "And here we are, all together, with a chance to give our graduates a proper send-off. I look around and I'm proud of our graduates, our faculty, our families and our community, of all that we managed to accomplish over the last year, and of getting to this moment."

"As we move on tonight, there are many lessons that you can take from your high school experience," Principal Charles Cobb told his seniors. "One trait that I hope all of you take with you is your ability to continue to persevere through whatever challenges and obstacles you may encounter. The Class of 2021 has persevered like no other. I encourage you to keep pushing to pursue all of your goals and ambitions. You all have the potential to leave an indelible mark on this world."

After the diplomas were conferred, tassels turned and caps tossed, the new graduates walked out of the stadium as proud Falcons alumni, ready for their next challenge.





**CLASS**  
• OF •  
**2021**  
*Congratulations*







Valedictorian  
Jasleen Kaur



# MEET DEER PARK'S 2021

## Valedictorian and Salutatorian



Salutatorian  
Matthew Heinen

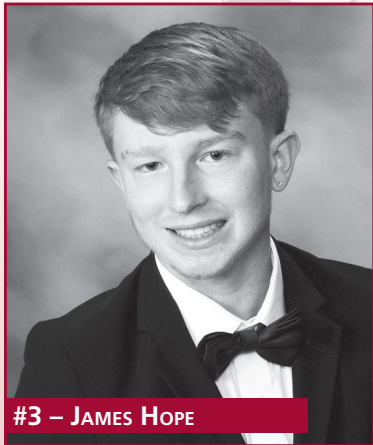
The high school's Class of 2021 valedictorian and salutatorian are Jasleen Kaur and Matthew Heinen, respectively.

Kaur, who serves as president of Deer Park's Red Cross Club, earned a perfect score on the ACT. As a member of DECA, she is a four-time state award winner and four-time international competitor, and was elected president of New York State DECA. She is a member of the school's varsity girls soccer and track teams, and also interned on Jackie Gordon's congressional campaign. Kaur will attend Harvard University, majoring in physics.

Heinen is a member of Deer Park's National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society. As an athlete, he has played on the school's varsity and JV soccer teams and participated in CYO travel basketball. He will attend Haverford College, majoring in computer science.

Rounding out the top 10 students are James Hope (ranked third), Ushima Chowdhury (fourth), Sameem Ahmadzai (fifth), Gianna Giffone (sixth), Taylor Korsiak (seventh), Isabella Coon (eighth), Chaim Shames (ninth) and Victoria Mung (10th).

"There's no doubt in my mind that you will continue to achieve vast and amazing accomplishments in whatever you go on to after high school," Principal Charles Cobb told the seniors. "Remember what you've accomplished here and use it as a base and foundation as you move forward, but always continue to strive for more, to better yourself and your community."



#3 – JAMES HOPE



#4 – USHIMA CHOWDHURY



#5 – SAMEEM AHMADZAI



#6 – GIANNA GIFFONE



#7 – TAYLOR KORSIAK



#8 – ISABELLA COON



#9 – CHAIM SHAMES



#10 – VICTORIA MUNG



**\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*  
Postal Customer**

May Moore  
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# MOVING UP



John Quincy  
Adams Primary  
School



Robert Frost  
Middle School



John F. Kennedy Intermediate School

## *Senior Awards Winners Recognized*

The high-achieving members of the Class of 2021 were recognized in a virtual version of the school's annual Senior Awards on June 15. Administrators and teachers were able to honor each winning student for their dedication and hard work in earning these school-based and communitywide awards. Deer Park then held a Senior Awards certificate pickup for the students in the front of the school on June 17, providing parents with the chance to take photographs of their seniors in front of a sign and balloons.

