

GRADUATION 2016: Alton High School graduates 432

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY - "Cherish yesterday, live for today and reach for tomorrow."

That quote of unknown origin was adopted by the **Alton High School Class of 2016** as their class quote. That class made the transition from seniors to alumni Friday evening at a ceremony in the school's auditorium.

It was also the last graduating class **Kenneth Spells** will send away as superintendent of the Alton School District. Spells described the Alton High School Class of 2016 as humorous, energetic and studious.

"It is bittersweet," he said. I'm very excited for the students to have a great time here. Graduation is a very special time here. I'm honored to go through it one more time with the students. I may be a little biased, but I think we have the best class in the country."

Spells presented the Valedictorian Award to class valedictorian **John Bohn**. The Salutatorian Award was presented by Alton School District Board of Education President **Ed Gray** to class salutatorian **Cullen Daniels**.



The intelligence of the Alton Class of 2016 was illustrated through the millions of dollars the students were awarded in scholarships. Alton Assistant Superintendent **Kristie Baumgartner** said she was proud of that accomplishment.

"We are so proud of our graduates this evening," she said before the ceremony. "What makes this class extremely unique are the millions of dollars for scholarships. This class will make the community proud for days to come."

Alton High School Principal **Russ Tepen** said the Class of 2016 was a small class for Alton, with 432 graduating students. He also said most of the students graduating this year will attend colleges and universities across the region. Tepen said former classes have attended colleges and universities from coast to coast.

"They value the resources they have in the area," Tepen said. "There are excellent colleges and universities in Illinois and Missouri."



Tepen spoke of students such as **Nick Cauley**, who is attending Northwestern University in Illinois to play baseball. He also spoke of **LaJarvia Brown**, who achieved second place at state track meets. She will be honored for her placement Saturday morning on the campus of the high school.

"We have a lot of gifted, talented kids in this school," he said.

In another heart-wrenching moment during the ceremony, Petty Officer 3rd Class **Tanner Wilson** surprised his little sister, graduate **Mariah Wilson**, by standing in with

the **AFJROTC Color Guard**. After they displayed the flags for the Pledge of Allegiance, the siblings embraced before the ceremony went underway.

Tepen presented the Platinum Alphas at the graduation ceremony. The diplomas were distributed by members of the Alton School District Board of Education.

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[Madelaine Gerard also contributed to this story.](#)