

THIS IS ONEIDA 54 MORE GOING TO TAKE ON THE WORLD

May 17, 2014 was a great day of celebration on our campus. Even though it was a wonderful day, I couldn't help but be a little sad because I knew it was the last time I would see many of those young people. On the morning before the graduation service, I pulled the alumni history that sits on the shelf in my office. I looked at the names from my 1993 graduating class. Many names I recognized and remembered, but some I did not. I wondered what all of my classmates with whom I have lost touch are now doing. I encouraged our graduates to keep in touch with one another. They now have technologies other generations did not have that will enable them to easily do just that.

We did a live streaming of both the baccalaureate and graduation services for the very first time. The services can still be viewed for the next couple of weeks. GRADUATION: <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/6926722/events/2996670> and BACCALAUREATE: <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/6926722/events/2996647>

54 young people walked across the stage of our chapel building and received their diplomas. At our baccalaureate service that morning, our speaker from the Elgin Foundation in Knoxville, Tennessee brought a tremendous challenge to our young people. He challenged our graduates to live a life of service and to make their "dash" count. Our "dash" is that mark between our birth and death dates on our eventual tombstones that represent our lives. Please join with me in praying that our young people meet this world head-on and make their "dash" count for the cause of Christ.

48 of our 54 graduates indicated they know Jesus as their Lord and personal Savior. Many of those 48 came to know Jesus right here on this campus, and many of them had their walks strengthened through some of our discipleship programs. Often pastors, when asked, will tell you their sermons can usually be categorized under discipleship. Hopefully we have done a good job of discipling our graduates who knew the Lord.

48 of our 54 graduates earned an advanced diploma. That is the most in our school's history. Those students did a little extra in terms of math, sciences, and languages. Many of our kids will go on to college. Some will join the workforce. Others will join the armed forces. Hopefully all will live for Christ or at a minimum live their lives in a way that serves others. Many tears were shed on May 17. There were many smiles, hugs, shared moments, and goodbyes. Our principal challenged our graduates to cherish the memories made at Oneida, and to remember their favorite moments with their classmates just like he did in 1982. The Oneida bond is unlike any other.

Addresses were given by our class president, salutatorian, and valedictorian. Each did a great job in his or her own unique way. Scholarships, awards, and diplomas were awarded. Just as quickly as people from all parts of the world swooped in to see their young people graduate, they were then gone and our campus became unusually quiet and somewhat empty.

I pray our graduates will make a difference in the world and, more importantly, the kingdom of God. Thank you for helping us put those graduates in the position to do just that.



**Larry A. Gritton, Jr.
OBI President**

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