



Brentwood Guidance presents

A SPECIAL “Q & A” WITH OUR “CLASS OF 2021” VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Nabihah Ahsan
Sonderling Valedictorian

Julia Spadaro
Sonderling Salutatorian

We are extremely proud to announce the Valedictorian and Salutatorian from both the Sonderling and Ross Centers of the Brentwood High School.

Annie Hsu
Ross Valedictorian

Ileen Villarreal
Ross Salutatorian



Sonderling Valedictorian Nabihah Ahsan

HOW HAS BRENTWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT PREPARED YOU ACADEMICALLY AND PERSONALLY FOR THE FUTURE?

Nabihah: Growing up in the Brentwood School District has truly been an amazing and humbling experience. I had the privilege to grow up with people from so many different backgrounds, allowing me to see the world through a different lens. In terms of academics, I had the most amazing and supportive teachers who taught me how to succeed and find my place in the world. I am so grateful for all the opportunities this district offers and all the skills I learned along the way.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

Nabihah: I hope to make new connections, meet new people, and expand my horizons. I hope to travel more often and explore new places, while actively participating in medical programs to help prepare me for the future.

WHAT HELPED YOU FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

Nabihah: Although many people prefer to wait until college to decide on what they want to pursue in the future, I wanted to prepare myself early and joined programs and courses that helped introduce me to different fields of study. I found myself most interested in medicine because of my passion in health sciences and the desire to bring a positive impact in people’s lives.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF BRENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL OR YOUR

PREVIOUS TIME IN ELEMENTARY OR MIDDLE SCHOOL?

Nabihah: My favorite memories of



NABIHAH AHSAN
SONDERLING VALEDICTORIAN
CLASS OF 2021

CLASS OF 2021 VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS



Brentwood High School have to be when my girlies and I would sneak into the library or computer lab late after school to finish projects for research or work on the latest newspaper issue. Once we almost got caught so we had to turn off all the lights and hide in the office. Don't tell the janitors!

WHO DO YOU ADMIRE AT BRENTWOOD HS? WHO HAS INFLUENCED YOU THE MOST AND HOW?

Nabihah: Throughout my high school years, I have been blessed with so many amazing and supportive teachers; however, Mr. O'Neill and Dr. Grella have been my greatest influences. From teaching me about the importance of having a growth mindset to developing a mentality where I see my goals as missions, they have helped shape me into the person I am today.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR YOUR UNDERCLASSMEN?

Nabihah: Dear underclassmen, take care of yourselves. As easy as it is for assignments to

pile up, it's just as easy to forget to take care of your mental and physical health. Make yourself a priority so that you can be persistent in everything you do. Work hard but enjoy your time at the high school and be grateful for all its ups and downs. Time will go by so fast so it's important to make the most of it!

IF YOU COULD BE SOMEONE ELSE FOR A DAY, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Nabihah: If I could be someone else for a day, I would be Jeff Bezos so that I can transfer all his money to charities around the world and bring relief to communities suffering from underdeveloped institutions and poverty. Instead of having tons of money sit in an account, I would use it benefit the world and fund the building of new schools and hospitals.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Nabihah: In my spare time, I enjoy trying out new recipes and baking delicious desserts for my family. I also find practicing calligraphy to be very therapeutic. When I'm outside, you can find me with my camera

simply taking in the earth's natural beauty.

WHAT TYPE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE HAVE YOU PERFORMED?

Nabihah: Along with doing community service at several places in and outside of school to obtain credit hours for honors societies, I have volunteered my weekends to organizing and teaching at the Sunday school at my local mosque. I am also a founding member of the Brentwood Leadership Club that aims to bring a positive change both in and outside of school.

WHAT CLASS AT BRENTWOOD HS HAS BENEFITED YOU THE MOST?

Nabihah: Dr. Grella's research class has benefitted the most throughout high school because not only did it open me up to dozens of new opportunities, but it has also taught me essential skills that I can take with me in the future. Along with expanding my knowledge in the sciences, I have learned how write research papers, use digital data programs, and improve my speaking skills.



Where do you see yourself in 10 years?



NABIHAH
AHSAN

In the next 10 years, I hope to be working in the health field and pursuing my dream medical profession. With a love for travelling, I hope to explore new worlds and use my passion for photography to document conditions in third-world countries while going on medical missions aimed towards spreading awareness on the importance of health. No matter where life leads me, I hope to be satisfied with all the hard work I have done to reach that point (God willing).

CLASS OF 2021 VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS



Ross Valedictorian Annie Hsu

HOW HAS BRENTWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT PREPARED YOU ACADEMICALLY AND PERSONALLY FOR THE FUTURE?

Annie: Going to schools in Brentwood has allowed me to interact with a diverse group of students, teachers, and staff members who are all unique in their own way. I learned a lot of lessons from them, whether it be about school or about life in general, that allowed me to grow into the person I am today. I also developed good communication skills that I know would be useful in the future through various forms of group work and PowerPoint presentations that we have done in class.



ANNIE HSU
ROSS VALEDICTORIAN
CLASS OF 2021

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

Annie: I aspire to become a physician assistant and work in the healthcare field one day. After graduating high school, I plan on attending Stony Brook University to get my bachelor's degree in biology and then to participate in a PA program to get my master's degree.

WHAT HELPED YOU FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

Annie: I was inspired by the dedication and the commitment of the medical and healthcare workers during this pandemic who all worked hard to save many lives despite having to be separated from their own families. Aside from that, I have always liked and still enjoy helping others when they are having a hard time and it allows me to feel accomplished as I have done great things despite my limited ability.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF BRENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL OR YOUR PREVIOUS TIME IN ELEMENTARY OR MIDDLE SCHOOL?

Annie: My favorite memory was last year with the Tree Lighting Ceremony because people came together to celebrate and we had a fun time. There were also various creative stands made by different clubs that sold food, handmade cards, drinks, and other fun stuff that we could buy and performances that we could entertain ourselves with.

WHO DO YOU ADMIRE AT BRENTWOOD HS? WHO HAS INFLUENCED YOU THE MOST AND HOW?

Annie: In regards to this question, I do not have a specific person whom I admire. But notably, my business teacher Mrs. McNamara is one of my teachers who has influenced me the most as I have learned important business and real life lessons from her. She has given me helpful advice and has really helped me out throughout the year whenever I reach out to her with questions and concerns and I really appreciate her help.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR YOUR UNDERCLASSMEN?

Annie: My advice would be to work hard and try your best at everything so you won't have regrets later on. Believe that the hard work you put in now will eventually pay off at the end with something good and rewarding.

CLASS OF 2021 VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS



IF YOU COULD BE SOMEONE ELSE FOR A DAY, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Annie: I think I would stay as Annie Hsu because I can remain as the main character in my own story and be my own unique self living my life in the way I want it to be lived.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Annie: In my spare time, I like to listen to anime songs and pop music that helps me to relax and to stay calm. When the weather is nice, I also go outside to play badminton and ride my bicycle to look at nature and to breathe in fresh air.

WHAT TYPE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE HAVE YOU PERFORMED?

Annie: I have helped set up an art show for the elementary school kids, volunteered to help at a craft stand for Tree Lighting for the Medical Society, donated items such as plastic bags and toothpaste to the Food Pantry, and volunteered for the clean streets project to help pick up garbage in the neighborhood.

WHAT CLASS AT BRENTWOOD HS HAS BENEFITED YOU THE MOST?

Annie: Accounting has benefited me the most because I can apply the skills that I have learned in that class to real life as it would allow me to go out and find a job as a bookkeeper.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?



ANNIE
HSU

In 10 years, I would be 28 years old and single having a stable salary working hopefully in the healthcare field. By then, I hope my family stays healthy and that I would be able to buy them a big house and a car for myself.

CLASS OF 2021 VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS



Sonderling Salutatorian Julia Spadaro

HOW HAS BRENTWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT PREPARED YOU ACADEMICALLY AND PERSONALLY FOR THE FUTURE?

Julia: The Brentwood School District provided me with various outlets to explore all of my possible interests from a very young age. Even in elementary school, I remember having the opportunities to be involved in different programs, from Bucket fillers to a Little Red Riding Hood Musical, which forced me to stay open minded about different interests and involved at school. Each and every teacher and staff member that I have interacted with throughout my education has been friendly, understanding, and dedicated to their position as a teacher and influencer in the lives of their students. The staff of the district and diverse opportunities available to me allowed me to feel prepared for the next steps of my life and education.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

Julia: I plan to further my education at a university away from home to study pharmacy and business and achieve my PharmD and MBA in a dual degree program. With these degrees I hope to obtain a job within the healthcare system in a pharmacy or within the management of a pharmaceutical company.

WHAT HELPED YOU FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

Julia: Two particular classes helped me focus on pursuing a career in pharmacy, Honors Chemistry with Mr. Roderick and AP Chemistry with Mr. Acunzo. These classes sparked my interest in the field and paired well with my existing curiosity of the medical field.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF BRENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL OR YOUR PREVIOUS TIME IN ELEMENTARY OR MIDDLE SCHOOL?

Julia: My favorite memory has to be the musical production of Annie Jr I was involved in at North Middle in 2017. Being on stage in front of my whole school, and putting on the production in front of so many family, friends, and community members felt so rewarding and special. This was the first production that North Middle had done and Mrs. Badurski was a wonderful mentor and teacher throughout the entire process. Being Annie was such an extraordinary role to me. At the very end of our last show, when we took our bows, I had felt so accomplished and lucky to have worked with everyone who was in the show.

WHO DO YOU ADMIRE AT BRENTWOOD HS? WHO HAS INFLUENCED YOU THE MOST AND HOW?

Julia: The question I have been asked the most is, who is my favorite teacher from the

high school and I can not only choose one. All of my teachers have had a huge impact on my life and my educational goals. Mrs. McNamara extended her knowledge of business to me inside the classroom as well as within DECA, a club in which I was able to be a part of, compete, and lead for three years. Additionally, Mr. Roderick has also been a huge influence on my education. He was my first chemistry teacher, sparking my interest in the subject, as well as an advisor to the school newspaper which I am a part of. Beyond the amazing teachers I had at the high school, the teachers and staff at North Middle School also have impacted me dramatically, with some honorable mentions being Mr. Stolf, Mrs. Kemp, Mr. Sonkin, Mrs. Rofrano, and Mr. Bucaro. Every single teacher has always pushed me to be the best version of myself, and for them I am so grateful.



JULIA SPADARO
SONDERLING SALUTATORIAN
CLASS OF 2021

CLASS OF 2021 VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS



DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR YOUR UNDERCLASSMEN?

Julia: Advice I have for underclassmen is to truly enjoy your time at the high school. Join those clubs, go to those games, and talk to those classmates. All of these events will be missed once you are a senior or almost graduating and you realize how much more you could’ve done. School work is important, but it isn’t everything so make time for yourself and your hobbies.

IF YOU COULD BE SOMEONE ELSE FOR A DAY, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Julia: If I was someone else for a day I would like to be Gordon Ramsey. The only reason being that I am a huge food enthusiast and would like the ability to cook myself gourmet meals.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Julia: In my spare time I enjoy competitive dancing, drinking coffee, and spending time with my family. I mostly enjoy the summer time because I like to be outside either on the beach or on a boat swimming and enjoying the sunny weather.

WHAT TYPE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE HAVE YOU PERFORMED?

Julia: I have always been involved in National Honor Societies since middle school. In these societies I have performed various community service events, mostly for my school. An event I enjoy doing outside of school is the Matthew’s Wish Toy Drive with my family.

WHAT CLASS AT BRENTWOOD HS HAS BENEFITED YOU THE MOST?

Julia: The class that benefitted me the most has to be Business Computer Applications and Business Analysis. Learning how to properly use Word, Excel, and other necessary computer application has put me one step ahead of some of my peers when it comes to formally utilizing these types of computer applications for projects, jobs, and other purposes.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?



JULIA
SPADARO

In 10 years I hope to have completed school, have a stable job, and a family. I also hope that in 10 years I have traveled to many new states to experience new places and people.

CLASS OF 2021 VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS



Ross Salutatorian Ileen Villarreal

HOW HAS BRENTWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT PREPARED YOU ACADEMICALLY AND PERSONALLY FOR THE FUTURE?

Ileen: Brentwood has taught me how to adapt and value what I have. Not everything goes your way or is in your hands when you want it to. Anyone can be filled with pride or delight to see a student succeed regardless of the circumstances. In addition, Brentwood has also shown a wide variety of cultures, ideas, humor, and personalities since the teachers and staff were once students from Brentwood and have their own stories to share, which allows the formation of connections with their

students like myself making learning so much more joyful than dreadful and boring because I can think “oh he/she understands my struggle” which was important to me being in a graduating class of absolutely extraordinary people.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

Ileen: I plan on finishing college being the best version of myself. Honestly, I admit this senior year is not my best year since I had to follow a new routine; this new routine even if it has already been almost a year with the transferring from being fully remote to hybrid, was really hard to change from waking up early, going to school, doing a bunch of activities, taking in-class notes, talking with friends almost every day for about more than 15 years which is absolutely mind blowing. However, participating in the 5 day in school schedule does bring some normalcy this year. I also hope to represent Brentwood as a leader, a member of the Hispanic community and as a young woman because we are not what others negatively say and we are going to change people’s assumptions made toward Brentwood. ALSO, of course I have a goal to be part of the medical field or wherever college allows me to be part of.

WHAT HELPED YOU FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

Ileen: In all honesty, I have changed my “dream job” like 5 times growing up. I wanted to be a veterinarian, police officer, firefighter, doctor, and now nurse/surgeon. But my motivation to focus on my dreams

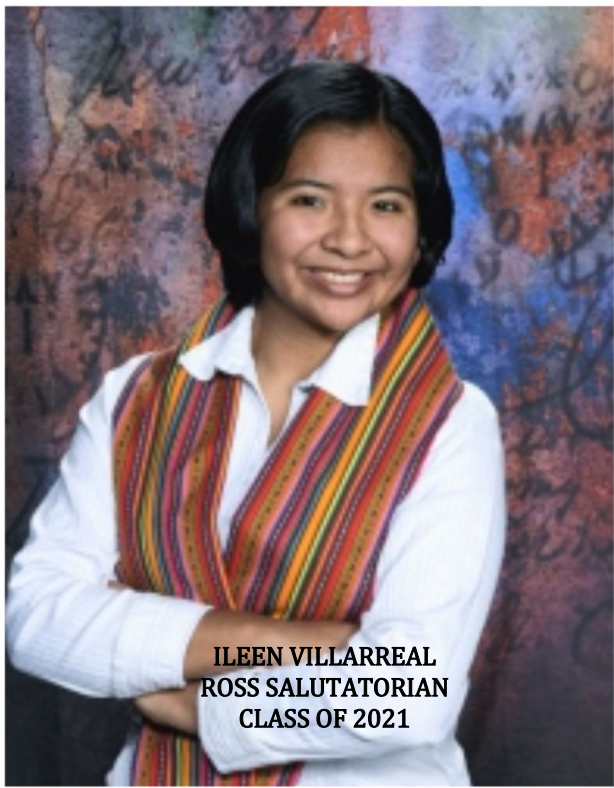
originate from a bunch of memories and several experiences in the past...like almost every hero’s origin story. Varying from interacting with animals, the desire to be recognized as a brave hero in someone’s life, and simply inspiration from a movie has allowed me to focus on the future to come home to happy and healthy family who have wanted me to be the best version of myself...and finally being proud of myself ...not cocky...but content and happy with myself.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF BRENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL OR YOUR PREVIOUS TIME IN ELEMENTARY OR MIDDLE SCHOOL?

Ileen: My favorite memory is going to my symphonic orchestra trip to see Mean Girls on Broadway with my friends. We may or may not have stayed up a bit late having a dance party and kind of sort of got quietly scolded by some lady next door next to our room because it was so funny and never thought it would happen to us. In addition, the show was amazing and funny. Every other memory of making jokes, connections, giving gifts, me being superior will be near and dear to my heart <3

WHO DO YOU ADMIRE AT BRENTWOOD HS? WHO HAS INFLUENCED YOU THE MOST AND HOW?

Ileen: Personally, I admire a ton of people at



ILEEN VILLARREAL
ROSS SALUTATORIAN
CLASS OF 2021

CLASS OF 2021 VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS



the High school. There are so many people that I’ve met and got to know and saw their greatest qualities. Varying from athletes (even if they were Freshmen) that I’ve met growing up especially my teammates on the girls track team and friends from other sports teams to people I’ve shared classes within every honors class and AP class because they’re so committed to success and are very driven. Finally, there are several teachers in my middle school who have taught me how to open up and not be afraid of my classmates letting me know that “they or he/she won’t bite.” Now more than ever I’ve appreciated and admired almost every teacher I have this year in my honors and AP classes because they persisted through their own struggles and here, giving advice like my mom does ALL the time.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR YOUR UNDERCLASSMEN?

Ileen: Dr. Octavius once said to Peter Parker, “Intelligence is not a privilege, it’s a gift...and you use it for the good of mankind.” (2004 Spiderman 2)

“Don’t take criticism from people you wouldn’t ever go to for advice.”

IF YOU COULD BE SOMEONE ELSE FOR A DAY, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Ileen: I wish I could be Peter Parker, Tony Stark or Steve Rogers, because they’re all confident, tough, persistent, have valor, intelligence, and they’re my heroes because they started from square one being ordinary people. Anyways, who wouldn’t want to have a massive brain filled with knowledge about Biophysics, Electrical Engineering for creating technology or have big muscles for being the perfect soldier along with compassion and fairness for others.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

Ileen: I love playing video games like Super Mario, Mario Kart, Luigi’s Mansion, Wii Sports Resort, Super Smash Bros, etc. (almost all Nintendo games) on my 3DS or play Just Dance on my Wii. I enjoy Minecraft too which is a game that all superior gamers play lol. In addition, I just love listening to all types of music to relax. Finally, I also love practicing on my violin and slowly learning to play the piano. I’m looking forward to learning to play the saxophone when I get my hands on one.

WHAT TYPE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE HAVE YOU PERFORMED?

Ileen: I have helped clean a beach, paint a mural for the Clean Streets Project, donated as many goods as my parents allowed me to. My siblings and I, donated lots of clothes/toys to PRONTO and other organizations, participated in the Breast Cancer walk, and persuaded people to buy products from Petco for an Animal Shelter. There’s probably so many more activities that I’ve done but these are the most memorable.

WHAT CLASS AT BRENTWOOD HS HAS BENEFITED YOU THE MOST?

Ileen: The class that has benefited me the most is probably English by finding deeper meaning in the color of someone’s shirt and in every single detail that happens in the character’s life. Math of course!!!! My mental math skills and taught me to not doubt the simplicity of a question and answer. AND my AP classes because they helped me be more organized my life and have more self-confidence.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?



ILEEN
VILLARREAL

I see myself in my future uniform (maybe a white lab coat, scrubs, or dark blue uniform) for my career. I see myself standing with pride with a clipboard in my hand with all the tasks I have to do maybe sweating a little because of the tasks I already completed...while looking forward to going out with my family to lunch...on my tab :)