



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE SHOW NOTES

- Episode Title:** High School Graduations
- Episode # & Date:** Episode #32 – June 4, 2020
- About this Episode:** Judy talks with two 2020 high school grads about the impact on their rituals of passage in the time of quarantine.
- Episode Web Page:** <https://sanmateofocus.com/high-school-graduations/>

EPISODE SCRIPT

[intro]

I'm Judy Gordon, and *this* is San Mateo Focus.

We gave a lot of thought whether we should run this week's episode, or just take a week off to recognize the importance of the issues that are affecting San Mateo and the country right now. But we decided to run this episode today, to recognize the students who are graduating from schools in San Mateo. Let's hope that together, we can help them move into the world filled with trust and confidence. We congratulate them and wish them success in their lives ahead.

This week we have a new sponsor, Dormitory101, inspired by a stay-at-home mom when she was preparing for her son to leave for college. Dormitory 101 offers a luxurious line of high-end, collegiate blankets that your family will love and will be a lifelong keepsake for college fans everywhere. With guiding company principles of empowering women and product excellence, Dormitory 101 strives to not only provide customers with premium quality products but also to empower other minority entrepreneurs, showing them that they can do anything they set their minds to. You can learn more by visiting them at Dormitory101.com and follow them on Instagram and Facebook. Enter the coupon code "sanmateofocus" during checkout to receive a 10% discount on your entire purchase. Offer valid until June 30th. Now, onto this week's episode.

Walking around San Mateo in the last month, it's been fun to see the various signs outside of homes announcing the pride that families have for their graduating students from schools in San Mateo and the surrounding area. For our local students graduating from high school, their senior year changed abruptly in just a few days in March. Normally, March is the month when college acceptance letters come to their home mailboxes, when senioritis seriously sets in, and when students anticipate the end-of-the-year activities they'll enjoy for the last time as a class. To say that the close of the 2020 academic year is different is an understatement. I had some questions about how it feels to be a student leader in a high school where traditional gatherings for graduation activities were cancelled and was introduced to two students at Hillsdale High School. Morgan Smith is the Associate Student Body (ASB) President and Meghan Olsen is the Treasurer. The ASB officers represent the entire student body and they focus on planning larger schoolwide events. I want to thank them for talking about an obviously disappointing end to their high school education, for the concern that they have



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for their fellow students, and for sharing what they've discovered since the school has moved to online learning.

In the months leading up to March, Hillsdale's Class of 2020 was working on the final plans for the traditional activities that would end the year. Besides the two big events, *Senior Prom* and *Graduation*, there is *Senior Day* and *Senior Night*. Senior Day was planned for a day of swimming and hiking, while Senior Night, which is hosted by the junior class, was happening at Hillsdale. As part of graduation there are awards ceremonies that recognize students and the teachers who support them.

When Meghan first heard about Covid-19 entering the US, she said that she thought to herself, "This isn't going to be the year that we expected." Prom, which was scheduled for April, was the first to go. Meghan was planning on borrowing her friend's prom dress from last year, a beautiful beaded white dress.

Teachers and students have been adjusting to remote learning at a time when being together is so important to them. Meghan says that their leadership teacher is a strong advocate for them and there has been discussion about hosting events at the first break next fall. Those decisions have not been finalized. Meghan understands that students will have moved on to their lives after high school but thinks that there are plenty who would appreciate the ceremonies at a later time. For now, awards ceremonies and their June 5th graduation will be virtual. Car parades have become a way to acknowledge special events and the leadership seniors drove by their teacher's home and delivered balloons and cards for her.

For Morgan, as ASB President, there was some frustration because the sudden closure of school and changes to graduation made it difficult for all students to be part of the planning for graduation. For the video that is being produced at graduation she is one of the emcees, but is concerned that other students won't feel as much a part of the virtual graduation. She said that for a short while, the initial closure of the school was going to be two weeks. When it became apparent that it was not going to reopen, quick decisions were made about the remote learning process and graduation without the typical input from students. Projects that were started were not able to be wrapped up. At this point, videos will have to replace being together as a group.

Teachers did a good job adjusting to online classes and using Zoom to keep in touch with students outside of class, but students who struggle or who don't have access to the online resources tended not to do the work as they moved to remote education. Both Morgan and Meghan expressed concern for those students because, as seniors, they still need to do the work to graduate.

With all the loss and the upheaval to their schedules, to their plans, to their senior year, I asked Meghan if it was hard to adhere to the shelter-in-place directives since the danger was an invisible virus. Her aunt is a nurse, and her sister is studying to be a nurse. She says that she understands how important it is not to bring the virus into her family, and how wearing a mask and maintaining her

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distance shows respect to the healthcare workers who are risking their lives every day. A lesson that she has learned is not to take anything for granted. You don't know how much of an impact school is in your life until it is taken away. It's where your friends are, where you're all together. Being quarantined you also realize who your true friends are and the importance of being in touch. She is certain her friendships will remain strong even after high school because of that.

Morgan also learned what school brings to her life. It's where she sees her friends and where she gets to participate with teachers. She said nothing compares to teaching in person. Even though her time was cut short, Morgan feels appreciative for the time and experience that she did have in her senior year at school. She says she has a greater appreciation of life itself, because she learned how easily it can be uprooted.

Morgan and Meghan are two of the many San Mateo students who are experiencing the long held traditions of graduation in a completely different way this year. If you want to acknowledge these graduates, *Here's The Deal*: On Friday, June 12 from 7:00 to 7:15 p.m., neighbors all over the Peninsula are 'Making Some Noise for our Grads.' Step outside your front door and make noise in whatever way you can to recognize them!

Okay, that's all the time we have for this episode. Have a great week. Thanks to Dormitory101 for sponsoring this episode. Don't forget to subscribe to San Mateo Focus on your favorite Podcast app or iTunes. As always, if you'd like more information about Dormitory101 or the topics in today's episode, visit sanmateofocus.com.

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Website: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>

Email: info@sanmateofocus.com

Host & Founder: Judy Gordon

Producer/Co-host: Peter Radsliff

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