2018 High School Valedictorians
Academic Magnet High School

Jenny Yao

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Harvard University

CAREER PLANS
To become a research physician

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Biomedical Engineering Research, Music Composition, Piano, STEM and Arts Outreach, Reading, Doodling, Stand-Up Comedy (in the works!), and cooking breakfast food

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Mu Alpha Theta, Fine Arts Youth Outreach Club, Science Club, National French Honor Society, National Honor Society

FAMILY MEMBERS
Dr. Chunhua Gao, Mother; Dr. Hai Yao, Father

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“Study hard what interests you the most in the most undisciplined, irreverent and original manner possible.”
- Richard Feynman

UNIQUE FACT
Jenny is a 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholar.
Baptist Hill Middle High School

Ajani Brooks

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend South Carolina State University and study to become an environmental engineer

CAREER PLANS
To work at an environmental firm in the short-term and to start her own environmental engineering company or work for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the long-term

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Greek Mythology, Gemology, Music, Animation, Sociology, Roller Skating, the arts, spending time with family and friends, walking around the mall, and watching movies

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
National Honor Society, Food Drive, JROTC, Band, mentoring elementary school kids, school registration, tour for new teachers, Student Council Secretary, Baptist Hill Bobcat Battalion Commander, Color Guard Commander

FAMILY MEMBERS
Crystal Brooks, Mother; Joseph Smith, Father; Khadejiah Brooks, Lashawna Brooks, and Shaniyah Brooks, Sisters; Joseph Smith, Brother

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“My fellow classmates, as we exit the Bobcat Den and enter into life, we remember a few words from a classic story we heard. ‘Everything the light touches is our kingdom,’ but unlike this tale, as we progress through life, we do not fall, we only grow stronger, wiser and fiercer. We do not step down, we continue to rise for the next generation of kings and queens to walk the journey of a bobcat. As no tail is set in stone, this is no exception to ours. Nothing is concrete- we will move on, and continue to grow this royal tree of knowledge to share within and among the den we once called home.”

UNIQUE FACT
Out of 314,000 cadets and only one of two in the state of South Carolina, Ajani received the Legion of Valor Bronze Cross for Outstanding Achievement in the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program.
Burke High School

Shanequa Christian Rainey

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Winthrop University

CAREER PLANS
To become a graphic designer and translator

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Reading, Drawing, Planning/Organizing, Crocheting, Graphic Design, Anime, Crafting, Japanese Language and Culture

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Academic Bowl Team and Robotics

FAMILY MEMBERS
Sharron Rainey, Mother; Calvin Goodwater, Sr., Father; Calvin Goodwater, Jr., Brother; Mary McAlister, Sister

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“What one sees as success is different from what another sees as success; therefore, it is important to adjust ones perspective of success to fit them.”
John Hendricks

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Wofford College and major in Biology or Economics

CAREER PLANS
To become a medical examiner with focus on neurological issues, or an actuary

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Soccer, Drawing, Math, and hanging out with friends

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Soccer, Cross Country, National Honor Society, Key Club, Yearbook, TedX Club

FAMILY MEMBERS
Susie and John Hendricks, Parents; Jason Hendricks, Brother; Hope Hendricks, Elizabeth Hendricks, and Hunter Hendricks, Sisters; Jackson, dog

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“Your version of motivation and dedication will lead you to your own form of success. If you do not make the effort to succeed for yourself, then do not expect others to do it for you.”
Findley McCormick Emge

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Clemson University to study Electrical Engineering as a National Scholar

CAREER PLANS
To become an electrical engineer in audio technology

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Playing classical and jazz piano, synthesizers and other keyboard instruments; His band, Fusion Jonez; Eagle Scouts; Photography; the outdoors; building drones; and pursuing his private pilot’s license

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Piano major, SOA Jazz Band member, SOA Sailing Team Co-Captain, National Honor Society, student-to-student tutoring program co-leader, NHS-run Red Cross Blood Drive Manager, organizer of school-wide ASPCA fundraiser, Jefferson Service Club, Tri-M Music Honors Society

FAMILY MEMBERS
Jane and John Emge, Parents; Ellen Emge, Sister

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“I feel that one of the most important things you can do is have confidence in yourself. Do that, and what may have seemed out of your reach will fall into place. Congratulations to the graduating class of 2018!”

UNIQUE FACT
His band, Fusion Jonez, which he formed with fellow School of the Arts classmates, was named Charleston City Paper’s “2017 Up-and-coming Band of the Year” and can be seen performing across the Charleston area. Throughout his four years of high school, McCormick has logged over 300 hours of community service through school organizations and will graduate with an SOA Credential with Service Distinction.
Janett Lozano

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Clemson University and major in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Computer Science

CAREER PLANS
To become a mechanical engineer

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Writing, Music, and anything that involves Fine Arts

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Jefferson’s Club, National Honor Society, Student Government

FAMILY MEMBERS
Mother, Father, and two younger siblings

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“Whatever you do, do it because you love it. Do your best, don’t leave yourself short. Learn to grow as a person and move on from toxicness, whether that involves friends or simple situations.”
Sharita Symone Gibbs

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Morris College

CAREER PLANS
To pursue a career in real estate

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Fashion and Style

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Afterschool Programs, Prom Committee

FAMILY MEMBERS
Solomon Gibbs, Father; Sherrylee Denise Jefferson, Mother

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“No one said it would be easy. If you want it, go get it. Hard work and dedication always pays off.”
James Island Charter High School

Simran Kaur Paintlia

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend the University of South Carolina Honors College and major in Biology and Spanish

CAREER PLANS
To pursue a career in medicine

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Running, Traveling, and spending time with family and friends

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
International Baccalaureate Diploma Candidate, Health Occupations Students of America, Academic Team, National Honor Society, Student Ambassador Secretary, Mock Trial, Cross Country, JICHS Orchestra

FAMILY MEMBERS
Manjeet and Ajaib Paintlia, Parents; Amanjot Paintlia, Brother

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“The only way to do great work is to love what you do.”-Steve Jobs
Military Magnet Academy

Jacob Allen Rowe

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend the University of South Carolina and major in Nursing

CAREER PLANS
To become a Registered Nurse and work with treating sports injuries

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Varsity Athletics, going out with friends, and playing video games

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
2017-2018 Military Magnet Academy Regimental Commander, Interact Club President, Community Parades, Community Service, Barnabas Ministries, Varsity Athletics

FAMILY MEMBERS
Jason and Patti Rowe, Parents; Richard and Marlene Brenneman, Grandparents; Jack Rowe, Brother

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“Always take steps forward and not backwards.”
North Charleston High School

Patrick S. Cunningham, Jr.

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend the University of South Carolina and major in Computer Engineering

CAREER PLANS
To gain employment in the field of computer engineering and support his community through acts of volunteering, mentoring youth, and creating a full ride scholarship for future valedictorians. When he is older, Patrick desires to go to impoverished countries and volunteer his services.

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
TURTLES, History, Animation Design, and Smite (he notes that he is probably the world’s best player!)

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Communities in Schools, Teach the Need, Gear Up, 2017 HHMI College Research Program Participant

FAMILY MEMBERS
Neyoko Whitaker, Mother; Leroy, Job, Derrick, and Shamara, Siblings

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“We cannot stop being awesome here; it is our duty to continue being awesome. When you have flown the highest you think you can, do not be afraid to look down; it is the progress you have made which will spread your wings once more.”

UNIQUE FACT
Patrick is a recipient of the Rochester Bausch and Lomb Award for Science and designed the logo for SPAWAR’s Summer Cyber Security Program. Additionally, Patrick’s mother and four siblings are all are graduates of North Charleston High School.
R.B. Stall High School

Maria Rojas Alfonzo

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Trinity Washington University

CAREER PLANS
To become a corporate lawyer

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Dancing, Photography, and making memories with friends

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Prom Committee Chairman, Yearbook Editor-in-chief, CTE Completer of the Year, Digital Art & Design Completer, SGA Secretary, Beta Club, National Honor Society, Chair of Public Relations Committee, Talent Show Lighting & Sound Coordinator

FAMILY MEMBERS
Yolanda Alfonzo and Fernando Rojas, Parents; Juan and Citiali Rojas Alfonzo, Siblings

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“Ethnic identity is twin skin linguistic identity – I am my language. Until I take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. This will forever stick with me. Everyday you should strive to learn to love yourself and your heritage because it is who you are. No one can ever take that away from us.”

UNIQUE FACT
On the first day of class, Maria said she has this very unusual talent. No matter the situation, context, whatever it was, she could make it about herself. We had a great laugh, until we saw the yearbook... see pages 15, 18, 47, 50, 60, 63, 71, 74, 76, 77, 106, 109, 111, 118, 119.
St. John's High School

John Robert Zepke, III

**COLLEGE PLANS**
To attend Princeton University and major in International Business/Relations

**CAREER PLANS**
To become a diplomat

**INTERESTS & HOBBIES**
Studying foreign languages, collecting books for his personal library, playing anything Nintendo, and playing music with his sister

**SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT**
ACE Council, Student Council VP, Senior Council Delegate, Academic Team Captain, National Honor Society, Boeing Internship, Tutored

**FAMILY MEMBERS**
Beverly and John Zepke, Parents; Ruth James, Grandmother; Zuriah Zepke, Grayson Zepke, and Nicholas Zepke, Siblings

**MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES**
“Thank you for all the memories. I’m not sure I would be the same person today without all of you. I wish you the best of luck!”
Wando High School

Samuel Murk Caya

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Brown University and study Economics

CAREER PLANS
To pursue a career in the public sector or work for an international institution such as the World Trade Organization

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Basketball, Music Production, Puzzles, Games

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
Mu Alpha Theta Chapter President, co-founder and co-president of the Programming Team, co-founder and co-president of the Electronic Music Club, co-president of the Latin Club, National Honor Society, Beta Club, AP Academy

FAMILY MEMBERS
Michelle Caya and Stephen Murk, Parents; Olivia Murk Caya, Sister

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
“Introspection is invaluable, especially as we transition into adulthood. It is important with all the change that we will be presented with to consider the ripples of our decisions and what may be left in the wake. Do not fear change, but be cognizant of whether you are adhering to the values and principles that truly define you.”

UNIQUE FACT
Samuel is extremely passionate about electronic music. He has been listening to the genre for seven years, and has been casually producing music alongside his listening. Music has become an increasingly important outlet for him, both creatively and emotionally.
West Ashley High School

Mary Stokes

COLLEGE PLANS
To attend Clemson University and major in Engineering

CAREER PLANS
To become an electrical engineer

INTERESTS & HOBBIES
Swimming, Dancing, Robotics, and being involved at Westminster Presbyterian Church

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT
WAHS Robotics Team, WAHS Swim Team, National Honor Society, Academic Bowl Team

FAMILY MEMBERS
Patty and Mike Stokes, Parents; Rachael, Sister; Cookie, dog

MESSAGE TO FELLOW CLASSMATES
 “Do as much as you can and find new opportunities that help you grow. The more you do, the more you will learn about yourself and about the world. Do your best to learn inside and outside of the classroom for as long as you can.”