

Inaugural Eighth Grade Graduation

So, it's been three years. For most of us anyway. Though I'm sure that any of the newcomers would tell you that they have been fully versed on every detail of all the years they missed. Our accounts of our time at Harford Friends are certainly very elaborate and animated. You've probably all heard quite a few yourselves.

At first we marvel in disbelief at the possibility of time passing so quickly. Then again, as we look at 6th grade pictures of us in our dorky outfits, smiling widely to show off the baby fat that we insist we've all grown out of, and listen to the recordings of our squeaky, childish voices, we assure ourselves that it's been a very, very long time. It was just three years – but then again, it was an entire three years.

Coming to this school was a risk for all of us. No one had any idea what to expect, and I don't think anyone experienced exactly what they expected. Nonetheless, it was quite the

experience.

We've all learned together – not only academics, but life lessons. We've learned about each other. We've learned about ourselves. We've grown together. We've grown as people, as friends, as members of the community. Not to mention the random growth spurts we all experienced in the race to surpass our teachers in height. We've laughed together – on countless occasions, let me tell you – and we've cried together a few times, too. We've succeeded together, and we've failed together. Everything we've done, we've done together.

There are plenty of common metaphors used to describe a graduating class: caterpillars coming out of their cocoons, birds leaving their nest – we were once compared to tadpoles, growing into toads. Whether we were hairy caterpillars, scraggly baby birds, or slimy, legless tadpoles on coming into the school, and whether we're butterflies, birds,

or toads, upon leaving, we had quite the unique journey in growing up. Our "parents" – teachers, the faculty, the board – were new parents – they also had little idea of what to expect. They were all certainly very experienced in their fields, but starting a school was a whole new ball game. "Parenting," shall I say, was a whole new ball game.

It took a lot of trial and error, a lot of experimentation. It took flexibility and creativity. It took a great deal of trust, and patience. We can all agree that it wasn't always easy. But looking back, we almost took for granted how comparatively easy it was. How much fun we ended up having together – working through the struggles and the kinks. The entire school community was able to work together, and each individual person was able to make a difference. Each individual person had a place. Not that there were that many of us.

Sarah Waldron



For my first two and a half years at Harford Friends, I had this feeling that I would always be here; that it would go on forever. After I had gotten into the swing of things in 6th grade and was starting to feel at home, the thought of ever leaving HFS totally disappeared from my mind. I loved all of my friends, I was having a great time, and I still had 3 years until I graduated. That was too far into the future for me to bother even thinking about it.

The thought of leaving didn't even cross my mind until about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through this year. It hit me in this wave of shock. I never considered that I'd have to leave my teeny little class that I'd grown so close to. By that time, I'd pretty much forgotten my other class at my old school, and I couldn't imagine being with anyone else. It's a pretty terrifying thought for me, leaving my class of seven in a 19 student school and moving on to a class of hundreds in a 1,800 student school.

Two days ago, I went over to Bel Air HS for a Spanish test just while school was letting out, and froze up when I saw all of the people there. It's a whole different world than the comfort and security of HFS. I will have a different class, and I'm sure that I will get used to them and make friends, but I highly doubt that everyone will be as close as my class is right now. There are just too many people for such a close-knit group. It's about impossible for that number of students to all get along.

That's part of the reason I love my class so much right now. Here, we're all friends. We know each other's personalities, our quirks, sensitivities, similarities and differences. We understand each other and everything that we're all going through.

I feel incredibly lucky that such an amazing group of people happened to be in my class at Harford Friends. Every person is so original

and special. Most of the time, we get along extremely well. Sure, we have our rough edges, and we have disagreements and arguments, but that happens surprisingly rarely, considering the fact that we are a group of teenagers with different personalities, strong beliefs and opinions. We work around our differences, and get along most of the time.

Today's probably the last day that I'll ever be together with this group of people all at one time. The teachers, and parents, and especially all my friends in the school. I'm so glad that I've had the experience of going to Harford Friends. It's still a shock that I'm leaving; that I'm actually not going to be coming back. Going to this school has been an amazing experience for me. It's really hard to leave it. I hope students that go to HFS in the future have just as amazing of an experience as I have had.

Hannah Stambaugh