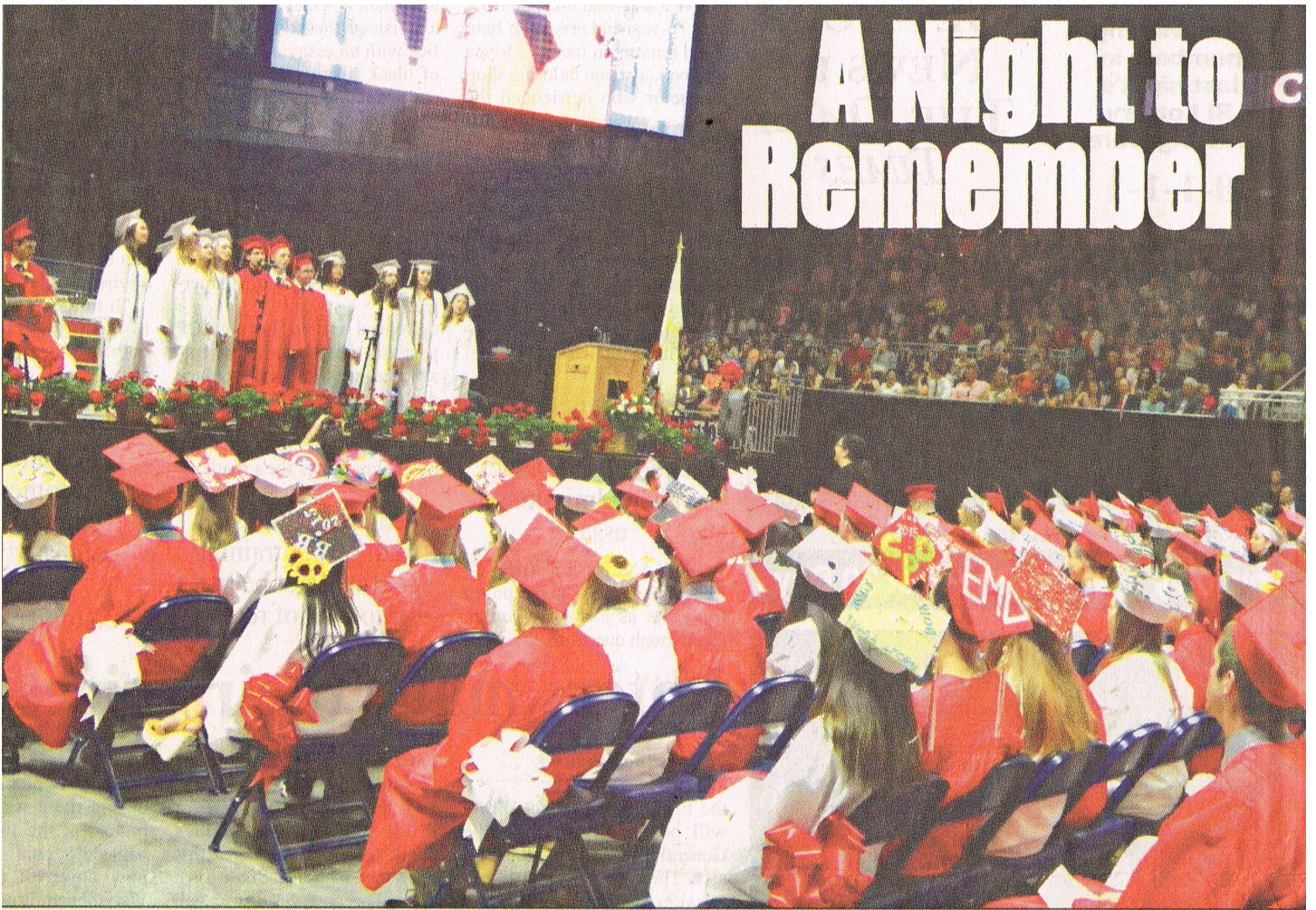


A Night to Remember



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With their mortarboards decorated for the festive occasion, the nearly 400 graduates of Coventry High School's Class of 2015 watch a musical number at Tuesday night's graduation at The Ryan Center on the campus of the University of Rhode Island. For coverage of the event, see Page A-3.

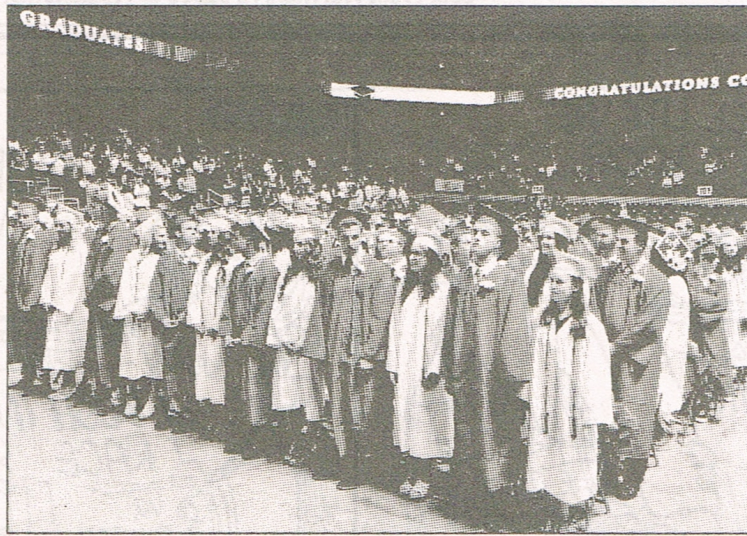
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KINGSTON— The Ryan Center was filled with a high energy crowd of family and loved ones as the Coventry High School Class of 2015 seniors graduated with nearly 400 students receiving their diplomas on Tuesday, June 16. Red, white and colorful, decorated caps filled the spacious sports arena at the University of Rhode Island.

The 81st CHS graduation had first and last experiences that were unique to this year, as Superintendent Dr. Mike Almeida addressed the Oakers for his last time as head of the Coventry School Department, with his resignation officially coming at the end of June. In addition, identical twin sisters Jessica and Allison Bellows were named valedictorian and salutatorian and made their commencement speech together, a first in recent CHS history.

Principal Mike Hobin, School Committee Chairwoman Kathy Patenaude, Town Council President Glen Shibley, and Class President Mikayla Nardolillo were among those to address the graduates with enthusiastic family and friends filling up the first two tiers of the bleachers with their cheers rumbling the arena.

The CHS Band played the iconic “Pomp and Circumstance” under the direction of



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Coventry's Class of 2015 rises as on at The Ryan Center Tuesday night.

William Smith while the graduates filed into their seats in the middle of the Ryan Center, under digital signs congratulating the 2015 class and a slideshow displaying photos on the wide-screen of students throughout their four years as Oakers.

Senior Jenna Larson belted a National Anthem a capella that resonated through the crowd and prospective Harvard student Kathleen Cronin was the first to speak, congratulating her classmates and reminiscing on their time at CHS.

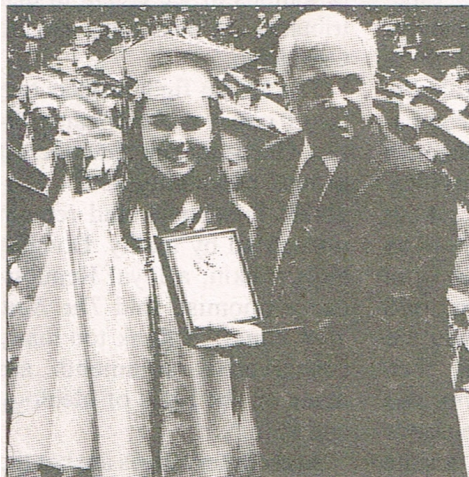
The JROTC Honor Guard performed a slow march on the platform in remembrance of those soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice to defend their country while “Proud to be an American” was played with the audience singing and

humming along.

A rendition of Natasha Bedingfield’s song “Unwritten” was later sung by a nearly a dozen graduates with the tune being played on a guitar by a fellow classmate. The audience started clapping half-way through the song, which caused the entire arena to cheer the chorus on.

The prestigious annual Oaker Awards were announced by Hobin to congratulate 21 students who represent different groups of students who have excelled in particular areas at CHS. The recipients are nominated by the faculty with some of whom have overcome challenges in order to graduate on Tuesday.

All 21 students stood while Hobin read a small biography on each senior that was written by the faculty and staff that knew those students best. The Oaker Award winners included Jordan Barbosa, Jennifer Fleming, Adam Vanasse, Rebecca Green, Matthew Conway, Stefania Jijon Tacuba, Sophia Gervasio, Paige Sykes, Kevin Lemos, Kyle Baxter, Alexa Almonte, James Gannon, Eric Lavoie, Natalia Angelone, Leanne Geer, Kayla Souza, Madison Cook-Hines, Samuel Wright, Nicolas Hoskins, Kathleen Cronin and Jose Santos.



One of the winners of the Oaker Awards, presented to 21 graduates, Madison Cook-Hines.

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“Experience, maturity, opportunity, purpose, service to others, dedication, family. These are the perspectives of these 21 individuals,” Hobin said. “They represent qualities all members of the Class of the 2015 have.”

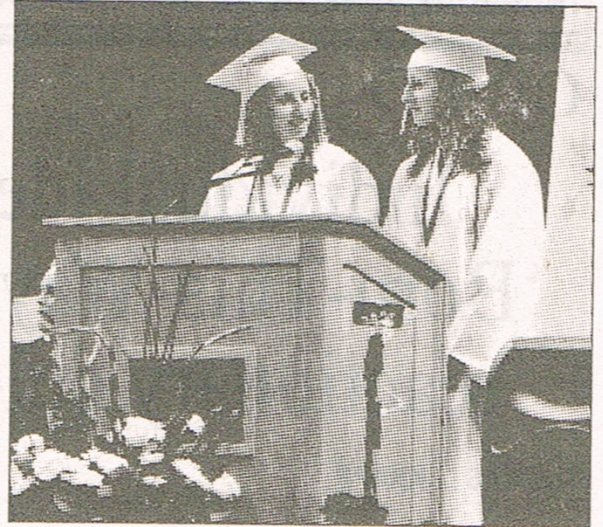
Hobin continued with, “My proposal to you is to keep life in perspective. Striking out at ten was not the end of the world. You will fail a lot, it is called growth — perspective,” he added. “Appreciate struggles, they are opportunities....perspective, appreciate advice from your parents and grandparents — their perspective just might make your challenges a little less challenging.”

Almeida’s speech was quick and to the point, referencing author Daniel H. Pink who asked three questions in a book about motivation and purpose in life.

“When am I going to do something that matters? When am I going to live my life? When am I going to make a difference in the world?” Almeida asked. “You see, when you have ‘purpose motive,’ you stand for something. You have

Coventry’s Allison and Jessica Bellows made a joint speech as the Class of 2015’s valedictorian and salutatorian.

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direction, determination and ultimately control of your future and you have a sense of fulfillment and happiness.”

When the Bellows twins spoke, they joked about their peers and teachers confusing them during their tenure at CHS. Both are star track athletes and Allison spoke about a past track meet.

“Everyone was cheering for Jessica,” Allison said jokingly.

They both explained the benefits of going through school with a twin and how they benefitted from each other. The twins said it was a support system for them to strive for greatness.

The Bellowses were among seven sets of twins to graduate on Tuesday and will both attend Brown University in the fall.

“For many of you, your opinion of high school often changed. For many, learning was somewhat of a nuisance, but as you matured as a student you began to learn for the enjoyment of learning, not necessarily for a particular grade,” Hobin said while addressing the graduates. “You gained the perspective that learning matters, not just to complete the assignment but to develop necessary skills. You gained the perspective of purpose.”