

# AREA NEWS

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OBITUARIES/A6

## In a boom year, Trinity propels 137 graduates

By **Kate King**  
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

STAMFORD — Enrollment at Catholic schools is on the decline nationwide, but Trinity Catholic High School is an exception, with 108 freshmen already enrolled for the fall.

That did not go unnoticed during Sunday's commencement.

"In this era of Catholic school closings, Trinity continues to buck that trend," President and Chief Financial Officer Kevin Burke told the 137 graduates of the Class of 2009. "The education you receive here at Trinity will forever enrich your lives as well as the lives of those around you."

Graduate Elizabeth Roemmele, 18, valued the opportunities offered at Trinity enough to commute to Stamford each morning from her home in Trumbull, her boyfriend said.

"She came all the way here for the education and to play basketball," said David Rivas, 17, of Stamford, a junior at Trinity.

Next year, Roemmele will attend school closer to home, having accepted a scholarship to play basketball at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Rivas said.

Valedictorian Caitlin Stote urged graduates to remember their religious education as they move through life.

"Do not let the title of your job or amount of your salary define you," said Stote, who received academic awards for English and Social Studies.

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"Live your life for its full meaning. Love others as God loves you."

The classes and faculty at Trinity have prepared the members of the Class of 2009 for the future, Katherine Tusch said in her salutatory address.

"This is the place you have transformed into the person you would most like to become," she said. "Whether you like it or not, you've grown up and now it's time to move on."

A list of Trinity graduates appears on Page A7.



Amanda Catino, snaps a photo of classmates Alexandra Ceci, left, and Claire Cingari as they get ready for the graduation ceremony Sunday at Trinity Catholic High School in Stamford.

SHELLEY CRYAN/FOR THE ADVOCATE



Ariel Camporeale signs a classmate's yearbook as the students wait in a classroom before the ceremony. At right, Mark DePanfilis hugs classmate Eplidia Casseus moments after both graduated.



## King Low Heywood Thomas grads ring out their farewells

By **Elizabeth Kim**  
STAFF WRITER

STAMFORD — Television news anchor Lester Holt urged the 60 seniors graduating King Low Heywood Thomas to be free thinkers and critical consumers of news.

Holt, whose niece was among the graduates of the private school, is the weekend anchor for NBC's "Nightly News" and co-anchor of the weekend edition of the "Today" show.

Speaking inside a white tent on the lawns of the Newfield Avenue campus, Holt reflected on the state of a news industry that has undergone seismic changes in recent years.

"The Class of 2009 has more ways to get news and information than the classes before them," Holt said. "Do not allow the digital chorus out there to dictate your opinions."

Amid sunny skies and a light breeze, the program lasted about two hours and in-

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cluded speeches from two students.

Valedictorian Meredith Packer spoke about the teachers and close community at King school.

"I had a flute recital beforehand, and it got all the nerves out of me," she said afterward.

Senior class president Aaron Metviner drew laughter for his comic homage to classmates and teachers. "They negotiated like Teamsters," he said about King administrators who wrangled with the class over keeping open a beloved senior room that was in sore need of renovation.

After being declared graduates of King, the members of the Class of 2009 tossed their caps into the air and swayed with smiles on their faces dur-



NBC News correspondent Lester Holt gives the address during the commencement.

ing the singing of "America the Beautiful."

As part of school tradition, they marched out ringing bells to a mob of family members and friends who sought to grab their photographs. Among them was Aaron, who received a hug from an English teacher he cited during his speech.

"There were so many memories and wonderful experiences. It really wasn't too hard getting the words on paper," Aaron said. "Ultimately, this was the greatest honor of my life."

— Staff Writer Elizabeth

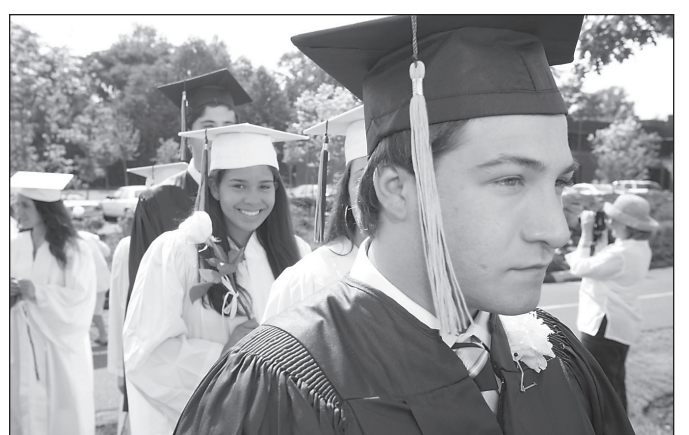


DAVID AMES/FOR THE ADVOCATE

Above, King Low Heywood Thomas Class of 2009 graduates Gaby Jones and Allison Rand take a self portrait before the start of Sunday afternoon's commencement activities. At right, Peter Robert Leone Jr. heads into the commencement ceremony.

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A list of King school graduates appears on Page A7.



## Stamford dispatcher dies after car crash in Stratford

By **Devon Lash**  
STAFF WRITER

STAMFORD — A Stamford public safety dispatcher has died after a one-car accident in Stratford Friday.

Randy Samaha, 39, a volunteer firefighter in Glenbrook for 10 years and a dispatcher at the Emergency Communications Center for nearly 15 years, will be remembered for his humor, his service to others and his loyal friendship, his friends said.

Samaha's Chrysler mini van crashed into a tree on a



Samaha

traffic island on Barnum Avenue Cutoff near the Interstate 95 overpass at about 5 p.m., the Connecticut Post reported. Samaha, a Stamford native who lived in Stratford, died on arrival at Bridgeport Hospital, according to the Post.

Firefighters had to extricate Samaha from the mini van. He was the only one in-

side, they reported. It was raining when the accident occurred. Stratford police are investigating the cause.

There was no additional information available Sunday.

Samaha was born and raised in Stamford. He had lifelong friends in the self-proclaimed Newfield Crew, a group that hung out in the Grade A parking lot on Newfield Avenue when they were boys.

"We had all kinds of plans — on growing old together, sitting outside and drinking a

couple beers," said Mike Lockwood, a childhood friend and fellow dispatcher. "We would do anything for each other."

Lockwood said Samaha would help anyone — not just friends and family members but co-workers and the residents of Stamford.

Samaha was one of the better dispatchers, Sgt. Robert Littlejohn said.

"You know the dispatcher's voice and he was very professional, very thorough," Littlejohn said.

Lockwood said whenever the police pursued a suspect, Samaha would be on the radio every step of the way.

"When the perp was caught, he'd stand up and give a high five," Lockwood said. "It made his night and he would talk about it for days."

Besides his professionalism, Samaha brought a sense humor to the office every day, co-workers said.

"Witty one-liners, practical jokes — he could make you laugh from the time you walked in the room until the

time he left," fellow dispatcher Tim Croke said.

A fervent Pittsburgh Steelers fan, Samaha painted the team logo in the bay window of his Stratford home, Croke said. Months after the Super Bowl victory, the paint remains, Croke said.

Glenbrook Volunteer Fire Co. Chief Frank Passaro said Samaha joined the Glenbrook fire department when he was a teenager, and continued to stay involved. He became an associate member when he

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