

Learning from the past, embracing the future

St. John's valedictorian is Sean Campbell of Islip

By RICK CHALIFOUX

ISLIP—Sean Campbell has earned the honor of being this year's valedictorian at St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School in West Islip. Campbell, who just moved to Wantagh recently after living in Islip his whole life, graduated on Saturday, June 2, with a weighted GPA of just over 103 and an SAT score of 2250. Next year, he will attend either Amherst College or Iona College and is looking to major in either computer science or environmental science.

"I've been into computer programming since seventh grade, and I enjoyed the course that I took on it this year," said Campbell. "I've always loved math and problem solving, and I would enjoy making useful programs for people to use. As for environmental science, I've always been interested in animals, from taking care of them to studying and learning about them. I'm also very passionate about nature and I could definitely see myself helping with green energy initiatives in the future."

In school, Campbell was a contributor to the Voices and Visions Literary Magazine, a member of the National Honor Society, and a National Merit Finalist. He received the Arcadia University Distinguished Scholar Award, the New York State Scholarship for Academic Excellence, and the Patrick J. Martin Foundation Scholarship.

Campbell said that he is excited for the



independence that college provides, but that he will miss the St. John's students and teachers that he connected with over the past four years.

"When I first came into school, I was very shy and hardly talked," said Campbell. "Despite that, the kids at school did not shun or dismiss me. A couple of kids actually asked me to start a conversation every day, and eventually I started to break out of my own little bubble.

Thanks to good people like that, I am now much more comfortable speaking to others."

Sean named his older brother Joe as his greatest inspiration, citing his good judgment, intelligence, eclectic personality and caring nature as what has made him a role model. He attributes his classroom success to his enthusiasm for learning and his unwillingness to cut corners along the way. As the valedictorian, Sean had his own words of wisdom to share with his fellow classmates as they head into the future.

"High school is an important time in our lives for growing up, but it is neither the beginning nor the end," said Campbell. "We all have a lot of growing up to do, but that is the exciting part of it all: messing up, losing everything, starting over from scratch. We will fail many times, but that should not scare us. Failure is nothing but a tool for growth. It is a learning experience from which we come out stronger people." ■