

# Tomah High School Class of 2017

## Hope for the future: Tomah top grads say they're prepared for life's next step

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Tomah High School's valedictorian and two salutatorians are ready for life after high school.

For valedictorian Alexander Taylor, son of Richard and Christina Taylor, he's just eager to learn.

"I'm really looking forward to higher education," he said. "I really just kind of have a thirst for knowledge, and it's going to be sated (there). ... So I'm really looking forward to that kind of intellectual environment where I can build off of everyone around me, and it will be a lot more cohesive."

Salutatorians Erica Stott, daughter of Paul and Deb Stott, and Cameron Shuck, son of John and Donna Shuck, are ready to explore the world outside of Tomah.

Stott said she's ready to live somewhere other than Tomah – someplace bigger.

"I'm excited to live in a big city and experience a completely different lifestyle compared to Tomah," she said. "Even though I'm going to miss (all of my) friends ... and all the activities I've partaken in during high school, it's going to be really fun to have new experiences and a new life."

Shuck agrees.

"I'm looking forward with moving to a bigger city next year ... there are a lot more cultural experiences to have, there's a lot more to do, a lot more to see," he said. "There are just a lot of things we don't get to experience in a small town that hopefully we'll get to experience in the next couple years."

Stott is also excited to move to a place where she will form her own identity. She'll graduate Saturday with her two triplet sisters.

"It's also going to be nice to be able to form my own reputation and be my own person — not being known as one of the Stotts, being known as Erica and people actually knowing my name and not my sisters'," she said. "I mean, obviously I love them, but it's going to be nice to have a life that's not completely together."

Taylor, Stott and Shuck agree that the Tomah Area School District has prepared them for life after graduation.

Shuck said that THIS courses, AP classes in particular, have prepared him for college.

"I've taken AP biology, and then AP physics, AP stats, AP calculus, a lot of the upper level math and science classes," he said. "I really think it's given me a good idea of what I'm getting into, as well as getting the leadership roles and experience."

Taylor and Stott agreed.

Stott said they are fortunate that Tomah offers so many AP classes.

"I think we're really lucky to have all of our subject areas covered and being able to get college credit early, because most of us have significant college credits going into college already," she said. "So we have a good idea of what a college load is going to be like, then what subjects we really prefer."

Shuck described his academic experience as "high-quality."

"I think it's good to see that just because we're in a smaller, rural school district that your opportunities aren't limited and that you can still take many upper-



The Tomah High School class of 2017 has valedictorian, Alex Taylor (left), and two salutatorians, Cameron Shuck (center) and Erica Stott.

level classes you would have offered at bigger schools," he said. "Thanks to the advising here, we do have a lot of opportunities that wouldn't always be available in smaller districts, so it's nice."

Stott said she learned as much outside of the classroom as inside. The school district taught her how to be a better leader.

"I took on a lot of leadership roles this year," she said. "(Cameron and I) were both the officers of InterAct and then I'm the president of the Health Occupations Students of America club this year, so it's really cool having to like lead those events and running the blood drive for the school. It has been really cool to have a leadership role among everything else."

Taylor said he has learned to not take things for granted.

"We do have a lot of opportunities, which I think is great. Our staff, administration, do a lot, and that is fantastic," he said. "In some regards we don't have as much because we are a rural school district. ... But I've really learned to appreciate that, nothing is really just handed to us here. That's really one of the lessons I've

learned here."

All three participated in extracurriculars.

Taylor participated in International Club, jazz band, pit band, marching band and was in cross country for three years.

Stott was in HOSA, InterAct, National Honor Society, Link Leader Crew, Diversity Club, Roots & Shoots and marching band.

Shuck was in HOSA, InterAct, National Honor Society, Link Leader Crew, Roots & Shoots, International Club, jazz band and marching band.

Stott said the education she has received in Tomah has prepared her for college. She plans to attend the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, where she will major in neuro-science on a pre-chiropractic route and chiropractic school afterward. She said the courses she took in Tomah played a big role in directing her college major choice.

"Taking psychology I realized I really like the brain and nervous system, so that's why I decided to go into neuro-science and become a chiropractor," she said. "I was originally thinking of ... majoring in neuro-science, but now I'm thinking I want to go into chiropractic instead, which is basically the same thing without medicine, it's more natural, but still the same goal to help people."

Shuck will also be attending the University of St. Thomas, where he plans to major in biology with a pre-dental focus and then continue onto dental school.

Shuck said he originally planned on going into surgery, but after attending a health care career camp last summer and seeing the other fields available, he chose to pursue dentistry.

"That was one that had never really crossed my mind until that point," he said. "But after doing that I really found out I liked it, so I did a job shadow with Dr. (Scott) Nicol in Tomah and really enjoyed it. That kind of pushed me toward that area as well as the job satisfaction from the surgeons I talked to compared to the dentists I talked to. They seemed a lot happier."

Taylor will attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he will major in biology with an ecology focus.

"What really kick started it was taking AP Bio; that was kind of my foray into the field of biology," he said. "I don't know, I just really liked the whole environmental aspect of it and the prospect of working with environmental factors hands on, going out and actually seeing things. We own a bit of property that I really enjoy, and going out there has really made me appreciate things, and it has made me want to help efforts to conserve what we have."

## To the members of the Class of 2017:

To the members of the Class of 2017:

Congratulations! You have met a major milestone in your education by obtaining your high school diploma. Your parents and teachers, as well as our entire community, celebrate this accomplishment with you.

Did you know that the work you have been doing since you entered school as a kindergartener has not been to prepare you for graduation, but rather for success after graduation? Whether you have decided to enter the work force, continue your education at a two- or four-year institution or go into the military, your education has been designed to prepare you for success upon graduating from Tomah High School.

There are 50 graduating classes of alumni from the current Tomah High School building who have gone on to accomplish outstanding career achieve-

ments and make significant contributions to our society. Our expectation is the same for you. Be a builder of the community in which you live. Offer your time, talents, and resources to make that community a better place. Raise your children to value education and to exhibit positive character traits. Have courage to stand up against injustice and inequity. Fulfill your responsibilities as a citizen in our democracy.

In the words of JK Rowling, always remember that "you don't need magic to change the world, you carry all the power you need inside yourself already: you have the power to imagine better."

We are counting on you!

Cindy Zahrte,  
Superintendent  
Tomah Area School District

## CLASS OF 2017 CEREMONIES

TOMAH HIGH SCHOOL  
BACCALAUREATE  
May 24, 2017  
7 p.m.  
Tomah High School auditorium

TOMAH HIGH SCHOOL  
GRADUATION  
Saturday, May 27, 2017  
10 a.m.  
E.J. McKean Memorial Field

(If rain, Tomah High School auditorium)

# Congratulations Graduates!

Taking care of you.  
**Tomah Memorial Hospital**  
TomahHospital.org