Holly High School
Class of 2019 ‘Top Grads’

VALEDICTORIAN

Timothy Kinnamon graduated with a GPA of 4.469. He is the son of Richard and Jane Kinnamon of Holly. For extra-curricular activities, Kinnamon was captain of Science Olympiad, president of Rho Kappa, a member of Zenith Brass, Jazz Band, International Thespian Society, and Oakland University Honors Band. He received high school honors including Honor roll for four years, and Summa Cum Laude. He plans to attend Columbia University after graduation.

SALUTATORIAN

Clara Huggins graduated with a GPA of 4.450. She is the daughter of James and Jane Huggins of Fenton. For extra-curricular activities, Huggins was team captain of Science Olympiad, historian for the National Honor Society, executive board member of Rho Kappa, and an Equestrian. She received high school honors, including Honor Roll for four years, and Summa Cum Laude. She plans to attend the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor after graduation.

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Jessica Bradford
Lydia Brauher
Jacob Bridgewater
Madelyn Chitwood
Lexie Curtis
Cade Dallwitz
Hannah Deahl
Marshall Dillon
Amber Dombrowski
Ashton Egan
Brianna Freiberg
Jesse Hepner
Landry Howe
Clara Huggins
Landon Jackman
Marissa Johnston
Timothy Kinnamon
Joseph Lavigne
Faith Lee
Ashley Lindley
Sean Loeffler
Ashley Lueschen
Grant McEachern
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Madison Meszler
Emma Murton
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Brynn Patrello
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HHS GRADUATES

Holly
Class of
2019
By Vera Hogan

When educators today talk about the importance of STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics), they are not kidding and students should really pay attention.

When Christopher James Snyder was a student at Holly High School, those studies were part of the curriculum, but not promoted using a handy acronym like STEM. Yet, Snyder, who graduated in 2002, is today a scientist.

While in high school, Snyder was active in the Math/Science Club, Odyssey of the Mind and the National Honor Society.

“I graduated in May 2007 from U of M-Flint with my bachelor of science degree in chemistry and a minor in math,” Snyder said.

He received his PhD from Wayne State University in May 2013 in chemistry. His major was “inorganic” chemistry and his minor, “organic chemistry.”

Snyder said, “As a teenager, I would play around with chemicals, such as lighting bonfires with thermite, making hydrogen gas from pennies and pool cleaner, and once I accidentally caused my bottle of homemade hydrogen to blow up, which muffled my hearing for the rest of the day.

“I developed an interest in how things work and learned that most things involve chemistry on some level,” he said. “In college, I realized that chemistry has a lot in common with art: once you learn the basics, what you can do is limited only by your creativity and imagination.

“I was never the best student, and I thought that going to graduate school was out of the question,” Snyder said. “In addition, I was sick of classes and I knew there was no way that I could foot the bill for a graduate degree.”

Snyder said that all changed during his senior year of college. Three professors from U of M-Flint (Anselm Omoike, Bob Stach, and Brian Buffin) strongly encouraged him to apply to a PhD program.

“They thought I had what it took to be a good graduate student,” he said. “After telling me that a PhD in chemistry only required a year of coursework and a few years of working in a lab in an apprenticeship-like position, I decided to apply. Also, when you study to get a PhD in chemistry the school actually pays you.”

**Where he works today**

Today, Snyder works as a synthetic chemist at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Los Alamos, New Mexico was chosen as the top-secret location for a joint civilian/military operation during World War II known as the Manhattan Project, he said.

“In short, LANL was at the heart of the development of nuclear weapons that helped end WWII. Today, LANL is a federal contractor (owned by the Department of Energy) that focuses on many areas of research, including chemistry, biology, physics, engineering, supercomputer puiting, climatology, and environmental sciences,” Snyder said.

“The primary goal of my job is to design and develop new propellants, pyrotechnics, and explosives that burn cleaner, are safer to handle, and made by greener methods of production,” he said. “In addition, I help teach a Homemade Explosives (HMEs) course to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians to help them learn how to identify and safely handle HMEs.”

**Personal life**

Snyder married Ashley Middleton, a 2004 Holly High School grad. “We actually didn’t know each other in high school, but we met through some mutual friends in 2009 and started dating in 2010,” he said.

Snyder and his wife love to hike in their spare time and on vacations.

“When I first thought of New Mexico, I thought of flat, hot desert,” he said. “It turns out that I was mostly wrong. Los Alamos is located 7,300 feet above sea level in the foothills of the Jemez mountains, which makes for some awesome hiking. Our vacations are usually planned around hiking, and this year we plan to hike to Havasu Falls in Arizona as our vacation.”

Although the Snyders do not have any children at this time, they adopted two rescue dogs since moving to New Mexico. “When we adopted Quinn two years ago, who was abandoned on the side of a highway in Texas.”

**Advice to Holly’s 2019 graduates**

“I was able to graduate from high school as No. 34 in my class by barely cracking a book. In college, my lackadaisical attitude got me put on academic probation,” Snyder said. “I dropped out and started working at Home Depot. A year later, I had developed a relentless work ethic and went back to college. I realized that ‘passion’ isn’t something that you find, it is something that you develop by rising to challenging situations, working hard, and continuously learning. My passion for chemistry has led to opportunities that I never thought were possible, such as a two-year postdoc (post doctoral research) in metropolitan D.C., working three months in Germany and traveling to places like Prague to present at conferences.”

(Above) Dr. Christopher James Snyder, a 2002 graduate of Holly High School, is today a scientist in New Mexico. (Right) Christopher Snyder is pictured here with his wife, Ashley (Middleton), a 2004 graduate of Holly High School. (Below) Christopher Snyder with the couple’s two rescue dogs, Loki and Quinn.

Submitted photos