

Congratulations to the Newton North Class of 2019!

Today is one of your highs, one of your sweetest moments – a significant milestone in your life where you as a young adult and your hard work and accomplishments are being celebrated. You are surrounded by teachers, friends and family who know you well and share in your happiness. The whole world and your whole life is ahead and your hopes unbounded. Hold on to this moment, this feeling. Hold on to this optimism and this camaraderie, this excitement and maybe even that touch of nervousness and uncertainty as you graduate and leave Newton North.

For there will be tremendous highs ahead and yet, inevitably, there will be lows.

And know that no matter the mistakes you will no doubt make, I certainly have, the wrong turns, the disappointments and, yes, sometimes the unfairness and even some evil that you may confront, know that we, your community – your teachers, friends and family - here at Newton North are here for you; we will always be your soft landing.

A couple of weeks ago, I went to a joyous birthday celebration for Izzy Arbeiter who just turned 94. Izzy lives in Auburndale with his wife of 73 years, Anna, and ran for decades a thriving dry-cleaning business in the village.

Izzy, you should know, was born in Plock, Poland. He was 14 when Germany invaded in 1939. As he was Jewish, instead of going to high school, he spent his teenage years in ghettos and then concentration camps, including Auschwitz.

And yet Izzy's life in America has been defined by optimism because of you, young people who he believes in, young people who are willing to learn the harsh lessons of the past and are leaning in to change the future for the better.

Why am I telling you about Izzy?

Life may lead you in directions you don't expect and may throw tough things at you.

As you move through life, remember Izzy Arbeiter, our neighbor who experienced unspeakable lows and yet at his 94th birthday party, surrounded by friends and family, we shared in his happiness, his accomplishments, his life's work just as we do for you today.

Congratulations to each of you.

Let me close with a thank you. I know I speak for all of you and your families and guardians by saying thank you to those here at Newton North who have helped you along the way, teachers and educators, guidance counsellors and custodians and coaches, to name just a few, for all that they have given you with good hearts and capable minds.