



SAN FELIPE DEL RIO CISD

June 10, 2020

SFDRICISD GRATEFUL FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Last Saturday evening, SFDRICISD successfully completed its sixth consecutive graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020. During this unprecedented time, the phenomenal success of these commencement exercises is a reflection of the never-ending dedication of the District's staff and volunteers. The entire SFDRICISD Board of Trustees, (President Raymond Meza, Vice-President Linda Guanajuato-Webb, Secretary, Diana Gonzales, and members, Joshua Overfelt, Ken Smith, Fred Contreras, and Amy Haynes), and Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Carlos Rios, would like to first congratulate and thank Dr. Jose F. Perez (DRHS), Patricia Rodriguez (ECHS), Alda Zuniga (outgoing Blended Academy), and Laura Sandate (incoming Blended Academy), for their collective leadership and hard work in organizing these historic celebrations. Because of their perseverance and the unwavering dedication of countless staff and volunteers, each of these milestone ceremonies were indeed a huge success.

From the first planning discussion to the handing of the last diploma, many students, parents, and community volunteers stepped up and worked feverishly with great pride and generosity. We particularly appreciate the invaluable contributions and feedback received from our senior students and their parents for regarding the design of our graduation ceremonies. Whether participation was through a survey or a Zoom meeting, parents and students worked collaboratively with the Administration to creatively (and safely) make these graduation ceremonies both memorable and rewarding.

The planning, orchestration, and synchronization of these graduation ceremonies doesn't end here. Behind the scenes, our counselors worked tirelessly to ensure state graduation requirements were met for our seniors. Kudos to Joelda Espinoza, Alejandra Gonzalez, Selina Cienega-Randez, Dr. Dora Salinas, Katherine Maldonado, Cynthia Frausto, Rocio Faz, Carolina Cardenas, and Lannette Hernandez for the support and guidance they offered our students and their parents in preparing them for their walk through Pomp and Circumstance.

We want to thank our SFDRICISD Maintenance Department team; particularly, Anastacio Mendez, Jack Castillo, Rolando Deleon, Michael Reyna, Juan Rodriguez, Eduardo Solis, Jose Quintero, Cesar Delgado, Manuel Davila, Mario Martinez, Joe Maldonado, San Juan Piña, Raymond Cruz, William O'Quinn, Tyler Smith, Elias Moreno, and Scot L. Carcasi for setting up chairs, stickers, speakers, and ensuring facilities were clean and disinfected for each ceremony.

The high school and district custodial team also played a key role in the cleanliness of each ceremony from beginning to end. The team included Alfredo Barajas, Bertha Aaron, Francisco Barrios, Yesenia Cardenas, Patricia Hernandez, Julian Fernandez, Aurora Laabs, Azucena Lincon, Martin Mojica, Martin Perez, Martha Ponce, Rolando Chavez, Minerva Ortega, Martin Perez, Elma Hernandez, and Edilia Salas. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts for ensuring our parents, guests, and students were safely seated to enjoy each graduation ceremony.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Val Verde County Judge Lewis Owens, Mr. Rowland Garza, City Manager Mr. Matt Wojnowski, and Mayor Lozano for extending the use of their resources, for guidance in policy

and approval of our plans. Special thanks to Judge Owens and Mr. Rowland Garza for helping to provide the contactless thermometers used in screening individuals as they entered the graduation ceremonies. We thank our local law enforcement, including SFDRCSISD Police Chief, Duane Maldonado; Val Verde County Sheriff, Joe Frank Martinez; and DRPD Chief of Police Fred Knoll, and their staff of officers and deputies who coordinated traffic, safety and security for each of these events. Whether they were at the street level, or guiding our parents at the stadium, we greatly appreciate their support and hand in making sure all of our graduates and their parents arrived, enjoyed, and left the ceremony safely. The health and safety of everyone was our main focal point. We extend our gratitude to people like Coach Ricky Smith who provided (and personally affixed) many stickers that would help signal where people should sit to meet the social distancing guidelines as required by our state and local orders.

Graduation would not have run so smoothly if it hadn't been for the masterful job of our commencement exercise coordinator, Kelly Ruiz. She was responsible for synchronizing the staff and volunteers that helped with the senior lineup, the stadium ushers, and screeners (Campbell Ochoa and David Ruiz) for COVID19. Through Kelly's coordination and help of our assistant principals Cynthia Sahagun, Carlos Barrera, Allison Mercier, Ramona Casillas, Del Rio Freshman Principal Thomas Cabello, and SGLC Principal Brian Westlake, the Class of 2020 were always set and ready to make their entrance!

Although we know that there is just no way to re-create the spectacular performances of the Mighty Ram Band, the Choir and the JROTC color guard, the Class of 2020 were able to experience the profound impact of Edward Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance, the pride, joy, and happiness of Francis Scott Key's National Anthem-The Star Spangled Banner, and the DRHS School Alma Mater and Fight Song. Thank you, Juan Nañez and Ricardo Rios, for bringing the joy and smiles to everyone as the sounds of these traditional songs resonated throughout the stadium and faded into the nearby neighborhoods.

We love and appreciate that teachers were there to witness the fruits of their labor. Most importantly, we thank them for their role in helping make graduation a reality and memorable. Teachers like Mrs. Janice Hardin, who passed out honor cords and stoles, Mrs. Linda Corbell, who gracefully stood as Mistress of Ceremonies for every ceremony, and Mrs. Cheryl Casbeer, who received many "Thank You's" and "I made it, Miss!" comments from the students as they passed in front of the diploma table. We also appreciate our staff members Christine Nowlin, Rosie Soto, Maria Zylka, Sonya Vasquez, Tilda Sierra, Yazmina Zapata, Lourdes Garcia, Terry Longoria, Mary Sanchez, Diane Lomas, Kristine Gladson, Noemi Hernandez, Gisselle Rodriguez, Ramiro Frausto, Janie Villarreal, Daisy Hernandez, Susan Cadena, Alejandra Torres, Lauren Cardenas, Angelica Franjul, Martha Limones, Mary Catherine Hargrove, Nick Velasquez, and Zulema Martinez for lending their hand where it was needed.

Each graduation ceremony was designed to have all of the makings of a traditional graduation. We are extremely thankful to the parents of the top six graduates, Mary B. Coggins (DRHS Valedictorian), Juan E. Salinas (DRHS Salutatorian), Marilyn Espinoza (ECHS Valedictorian), Karina Delgado Gaona (ECHS Salutatorian), Claudia M. Cornejo (DRHS #3 Invocation), Cassandra I. Payen (ECHS #3 Benediction), and Alyssa B. Gonzalez (Class President) who allowed them to complete their speeches during each commencement ceremony. Their poise, passion and eloquence is to be commended. Numerous "likes" were received for their messages of hope, inspiration, and their positive outlook on life in spite of the limitations they encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SFDRCSISD is indeed grateful for the opportunity to have honored the Class of 2020. We wouldn't have been able to capture, post and broadcast on the web, social media and on our cable access channel the many memories made by our graduating seniors if wasn't for the SFDR Communications Team – Rene "Reno" Luna, Pedro Ojeda, and Willard Jenkins. From the beginning, their mission was to "make it memorable" and "bring it home" so that extended family members and friends could partake (at least virtually), in the celebration and joy we've felt for our graduates. Thank you, all for making it all possible!