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Virtual graduations across U-46 will be streamed Saturday

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy



Mahima Dave, a South Elgin High School senior, will be among 2,745 Elgin Area School District U-6 students graduating in virtual ceremonies Saturday.



Fhel Vince Megia, a Streamwood High School senior, ranks in the top 2% of his class. Seniors from all five high schools in Elgin Area School District U-46 will graduate Saturday in virtual ceremonies.

Graduation Day won't be exactly what Mahima Dave expected when entering senior year at South Elgin High School.

"For all of us, our plans shifted," said the 17-year-old about adjustments students had to make this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic closing schools.

Mahima plans to get dressed up Saturday for a graduation watch party at home.

Over the past two months of distance learning, she has learned to be positive.

"Throughout this entire fourth quarter I felt more connected with all my teachers and peers," she said.

Mahima will be among 2,745 Elgin Area School District U-46 students graduating in virtual ceremonies Saturday.

School teams delivered caps, gowns, stoles and cords to seniors who submitted photos of themselves wearing them. Principals, district administrators and selected seniors recorded graduation speeches in advance on a decorated stage at South Elgin High School.

"All of the students are sharing one quote of what high school meant to them," Mahima said.

“It will be a great way to close this high school journey on a good note. I think during this time every bit of positivity will help everyone.”

The ceremonies will be streamed at 3 p.m. on the district and school websites and social media. Recordings will be posted on those platforms later.

“This is not how any of us expected to celebrate the Class of 2020, but we have done our best to make this virtual ceremony meaningful for our graduates and their families,” Superintendent Tony Sanders said. “I am proud of how our seniors have faced this challenge, with resiliency, humor, kindness and understanding. We are celebrating differently this year, but we are still united.”

The district canceled separate in-person graduation ceremonies — originally set for May 23 and rescheduled for July 11 — for its five high schools usually held the same day at the Sears Centre Arena in Hoffman Estates.

Officials decided it would be challenging to pull off in-person ceremonies with social distancing restrictions and set aside funds for graduating classes to gather for in-person events at a later date as determined by the schools.

During Saturday’s ceremonies, U-46 will honor 47 seniors who are part of its full-time dual credit program taking courses at Elgin Community College.

They will earn both high school and college credit for each class.

U-46 also will issue special honors to graduates who demonstrate a high level of proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English — 182 students will earn the state’s Seal of Biliteracy and 252 students will receive commendation for significant progress toward achieving proficiency. Students who earn the seal qualify for two years credit in that language at any Illinois college.

The graduating class includes 20 Superintendent’s Scholarship recipients who are first-generation college students and 52 seniors who rank among the top 2% of their graduating class from all five high schools.

“Although this pandemic has hindered an important celebration, all our efforts did not go to waste,” said student Fhel Vince Mejia, among the top 2% of his class at Streamwood High School.

“We still made it through high school.”