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TLC's Katherine Thomas High School Celebrates Graduates

Nineteen students share experiences, receive diplomas in moving ceremony

Rockville, Maryland—On Tuesday, June 15 2010, over 300 supporters gathered to celebrate and honor the 2010 graduating class of TLC's [Katherine Thomas High School Program](#) at Temple Beth Ami in Rockville. Nineteen students received their diplomas, a high achievement that reflects the KTS mission of empowering students with learning differences to reach their full potential. The keynote speaker was [Ron Suskind](#), parent of graduate **Owen Suskind** and Pulitzer Prize-winning author and journalist. This is the third high school commencement for KTS, an independent day school for students in preschool through twelfth grade with moderate to severe language and learning disabilities and/or high-functioning autism.

Each of the graduates took to the stage, telling heartfelt stories about their struggles and successes in their own words as they thanked their teachers and families for their support. Senior **Chris Puvak** discovered that "When I push myself, I don't break. I don't fall. I just get stronger." **Jody Swanson** described herself as growing from "an awkward freshman to a blossoming college freshman achiever." And **Andre Byron-Paul Fontenot** "will remember most my friends and teachers trying to make me comfortable at this school."

Director **Rhona Schwartz** notes that this year's group of seniors, which hail from Maryland, DC and northern Virginia, is especially hardworking and have been positive leaders and peer mediators in the school: "We are all very proud of the hard work by these students and the teachers that have helped them overcome many challenges to get here."

Musical accompaniment was provided by KTS alumni **Annabel Hunter**, currently studying music at Shenandoah College. Members of the audience were also treated to a choral interlude of "Seasons of Love" from the Broadway musical *Rent*, performed by the KTS Middle and High School Chorus. Directed by music teacher **Amy Gardiner**, the performance featured seniors **Robbie Nunez**, **Tyisha Owens**, **Jody Swanson** and **Jonathan Tipping**.

Nunez, a talented vocalist, received a three-quarter music scholarship in opera to Marshall University in West Virginia, while Swanson will be attending Dean College in Massachusetts, joining the many others who are planning on continuing their education in post-secondary programs around the country. And some, such as **Adam Silverstein**, have also lined up summer opportunities. Silverstein, who interned at the Verizon Center, has a coveted summer job as a bat boy for the Washington Nationals before he goes off to college.

Diplomas were presented by TLC Board of Trustees President **Bruce Hunter** and Executive Director Dr. **Pat Ritter** with a reception following.

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