

Heartland Lutheran students encouraged to be rocks



Graduate Bridget Strauss hugs Elly Keilig.

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Be rocks.

That was the message Curt Fischer, former Heartland Lutheran High School administrator, gave the class of 2009.

“I’d like you to be real and make sure everything around you is real, don’t make your life such a monument that you forget about other things, recognize those in your life that keep you from rolling down hill and do the same for others, and remember that Jesus Christ is the rock in your life,” he said.

Fischer, who is now the executive director of Springfield, Ill., Lutheran High School, made his points using four rocks that sat on a table next to the podium.

The first rock was pumice stone.

“This one is kinda fake,” he said. “It would float in water. This is not the real thing.”

The education received at Heartland Lutheran has equipped the graduates with basics they need to make tough choices and to know what’s real and what isn’t, he said.

The second stone was a little heavier and came from the Crazy Horse monument in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The man who started the monument died before it was finished and his children have carried on. Now, his grandchildren are wondering if they’ll be able to see the project through to completion. Fischer warned the students not to let one thing

become so important they neglect other things in their lives.

The third rock has been with Fischer for 40 years. It helped keep his first house, a mobile home, from rolling down a hill. When Fischer and his wife moved the trailer, they took the rock in case they lived on a hill again. It is a reminder of all of the people in life there to help keep you on the right path and prevent you from rolling downhill, he told the graduates.

The final rock is “Sophie’s Rock,” he said. Before Fischer and his wife had children, they had a dog named Sophie. When the dog died unexpectedly, it hit the couple hard because it was the first big loss they could remember. When he was digging a grave for his pet, Fischer’s shovel hit on the rock and he decided to keep it.

“Since then we’ve had many bigger loses and those things hurt,” he said. “They leave a big hole in your heart. But Jesus fills that hole.”

In closing, Fischer said the students have learned all these things at Heartland Lutheran and if they remember them, they’ll be okay.

“I say you’ll be just fine and the Rock of Ages says you’ll be just fine,” he said.

Salutatorian Paige Liess’ address also acknowledged the students had learned a lot in their time at Heartland Lutheran, and not all of it came from books. She said teachers, friends and family have helped prepare them for the future.

She fought back tears as she thanked parents for the sacrifices they’ve made and pointed out the number of changes the class had been through, including moving into a new building.

“And God gave us the blessing of each other,” she said smiling at her friends. “We’ve been bonded through our faith, memories, jokes and friendships. At times we’ve spent more time with each other than with our own families.”

Valedictorian Daniel Gibson outlined the group’s academic and athletic accomplishments, and said they did it all while giving praise to God.

“We’ve gained valuable experiences that will help shape our future,” he said.

He said the group may include future doctors and nurses or mechanics and motel managers but one thing will always tie them together — their great Christian education.

“Heartland Lutheran has been a home along the way,” he said. “The journey won’t end here.”