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And the winner is . . .

Huntington – Gateway seniors Rachel LeBarron and Anna Pless were named Valedictorian and Salutatorian at the annual Senior Awards Ceremony held at the school on Wednesday, May 31. Pless also received the Golden Achievement Award, Gateway’s most prestigious honor, based on outstanding leadership, scholarship and service throughout their high school career.

Pless is a highly decorated member of the Gateway Concert Band (where she is President and Drum Major) and Jazz Band, earning top audition scores and a place in the Western Massachusetts Music Educators District Band all four years of high school on alto saxophone. She also earned a spot in the Massachusetts All-State Band this year. She is the president of the Class of 2017 and served as a student liaison to the Gateway Regional School Committee this year. She was also Yearbook Editor and took part in As Schools Match Wits, National Honor Society, Best Buddies, and Student Council. Anna was one of the Gateway students who traveled to Costa Rica this year over spring break on a science, Spanish and community service trip. In addition to the Golden Achievement Award, Anna received the Gateway Teachers’ Association Future Teacher Scholarship, North Hall Association Scholarship, Better Business Bureau Scholarship, Gateway Math Award, Louis Armstrong Jazz Award, and John Phillip Sousa Band Award, among others. She was selected by community leaders to attend Massachusetts Girls State last year and also represented Gateway at MassSTAR, returning the following year as a junior facilitator. Outside of Gateway, Anna is a Worship Team Leader at the Cornerstone Christian Church and volunteers as an Assistant to the Chester Town Clerk. She will attend the University of Massachusetts/Amherst this fall and major in Music and Music Education. Anna is the daughter of Kazue Pless of Chester and Bayard Pless of California.

LeBarron, who held the highest grade point average in the Class of 2017, was also honored with The “Literal Cinderella Story Award” from the Drama Club (after portraying Cinderella in this year’s production of “Into the Woods”), and awards for Excellence in AP Language and Composition, AP Calculus, AP Physics I and II, Anatomy & Physiology, and Spanish IV. A citizen at the 2016 Massachusetts Girls State, Rachel was a state winner and National Finalist for the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. She is president of Model United Nations and Student Council, Vice President of the Class of 2017, and captained the high school girls soccer team her junior and senior years. She was also a member of the high school band (where she served as an officer from 8th grade on), captained the girls Varsity Downhill Ski Team this year, and served on the Red Cross Club and School Climate Team. An avid community volunteer, Rachel initiated a community-wide coat drive as an 8th grader, collecting over 1,000 coats for people in need over the past 5 years. She was also elected to serve on the Western Massachusetts Student Advisory Council, where she then became the Regional Co-Chair, leading her to also serve on the Governor’s State Student Advisory Council. As a junior, she received the Dartmouth Club of Pioneer Valley Book Award and the Hampshire County Smith Book Award, and represented the soccer team at the MIAA Student Athlete Citizenship awards. She is
the daughter of Susan and Adam LeBarron of Chester, and will attend Boston College in the fall to begin medical studies.

A complete listing of senior awards was posted in the June 5 issue of Breaking News on the Gateway website.

Graduation was held at Gateway on Friday, June 2 at 6 p.m. It will take place on Booster Field (weather permitting). If the weather does not cooperate, it will be in the Gateway Performing Arts Center for ticket holders only; however, the ceremony will be simulcast to the high school gymnasium for additional guests.

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Top honors went to Gateway seniors Rachel LeBarron (Valedictorian) and Anna Pless (Salutatorian and Golden Achievement Award winner) at the annual Sr. Awards Ceremony on Wednesday, May 31.