

My name is Harry Hudome and I graduated in 2012 after having attended Star of the Sea Catholic School for eight years. I was absolutely delighted when I was asked about how my time at Star of the Sea shaped me into the person that I am today and what this school means to me.

I am currently in my second year at Ocean Lakes High School. I give credit to the foundations I was given at Star of the Sea for enabling me to find my way in high school. I am an Honor Roll student, serve on the Sophomore Class Executive Board, and am a member of the SCA, the Forensics Team, and the Newspaper Staff. My participation in the many extracurricular opportunities at Star of the Sea helped me to develop my senses of faith, leadership, commitment, and service that have proved extremely useful when getting involved in high school.

My final year at Star of the Sea was the year that we were named a National Blue Ribbon School, although the school's high standard of academic excellence has been around since its inception. It is my belief

, however, that what really distinguishes Star of the Sea from any other school in this city—both public and private—is the fantastic sense of community that is found within this school. From the time a family enters this school until the time they leave, each person is graciously accepted as a part of the community. At Star of the Sea, I was taught to go out of my way to serve the community, respect teachers and other authority figures, take leadership roles and opportunities as they become available to me, and to turn in the highest quality of work that I am able to produce.

Families at Star of the Sea willingly serve both the school and the community as a whole. Parents are expected to volunteer at the school for a certain amount of hours each year and, upon reaching middle school, students are also expected to complete this service requirement. When I was in middle school, my class would “adopt” a less-fortunate family from the Judeo-Christian Outreach Center and come together to make their season brighter by purchasing toys and clothing for these families around the holidays.

Something that I really noticed going to a public school was the fact that the other students did not seem to appreciate the teachers and faculty members as we always had done at Star of the Sea. During my time here, we always remembered to say “thank you” to the teachers upon leaving the classroom to show that we were truly grateful for the time that they took to be there and teach us. It was not necessarily something that we were taught to do; it was just something that we did. I still thank my teachers every day when leaving the classroom and have had both students and teachers ask me if I “always did that.” I have also had teachers who have told me that “thank you's” were not something that they received often and that it really brightens their day.

Another great aspect of my experience at Star of the Sea was the wide abundance of opportunities for me to succeed academically, socially, and athletically. In 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I served as the SCA Commissioner of Publicity, which was a great chance for me to experience student government before heading into high school where SCA exists on a grander scale and is extremely influential in day-to-day life at school. I also played basketball at Star of the Sea. I'm not going to lie. I was bad at it. Although it wasn't my favorite thing ever and I wasn't nearly the greatest player, I am still incredibly thankful for the opportunity to play. If I had gone to a public school, I would have had no chance at making a team and would have missed out on the crucial lessons I learned about being on a team from my five years playing basketball.

The education that I have received at Star of the Sea has prepared me extremely well for high school. When I applied for the academy programs at Tallwood, First Colonial, and Ocean Lakes

in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I was accepted into all three of them. Yes, I did turn all of them down in favor of going to regular school, which has not prevented me from achieving high and receiving special recognition. I came into Ocean Lakes with three high school credits already under my belt and plan to leave with thirty-four. I have been on the Honor Roll for each of the five quarters that I have been in high school. Last year, I was the Male Ninth Grade English Student of the Year. Teachers continue to tell me that they are very impressed by the work that I turn in to them, and my friends from Star of the Sea who have gone into public school as well have received similar comments.

That brings me to my friends. When I graduated from Star of the Sea, there were twenty-two other people in my class. I can honestly say that I am friends with each and every one of them. I was fortunate enough to have three of my best friends go on to Ocean Lakes with me, and I still see them (and other Star of the Sea grads that were not in my grade) every day. As far as the ones that went on to different schools, I still see them as well. We get together frequently and laugh and reminisce about our time together at SOS. I also still do things with students that didn't graduate with us or that have moved away since graduating. The friends that I made here at Star of the Sea are some of the greatest people in the world and I am lucky enough to have spent eight wonderful years with them at this fantastic school.

These are but a few of my experiences at Star of the Sea; the list goes on.

I'd like to close by thanking the faculty, staff, and many volunteers for their dedication and commitment and my parents for sending me to Star of the Sea Catholic School.

