

## BOARD MEMBERS

Tina Certain  
Robert P. Hyatt  
Leannetta McNealy, Ph.D.  
Gunnar F. Paulson, Ed.D.  
Mildred Russell

## SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Shane Andrew, Interim Superintendent



District Office  
620 East University Avenue  
Gainesville, Florida  
32601-5498

www.sbac.edu  
(352) 955-7300

*Mission Statement: We are committed to the success of every student!*

---

## NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:  
Jackie Johnson/(352) 955-7545  
Dr. Tim Wright/(386) 462-1125

For Immediate Release

### *Santa Fe High School valedictorian and salutatorian follow in their siblings' footsteps*

At Santa Fe High School, being at the top of their graduating classes is a family affair—or rather, a ‘families’ affair—for two current and two past students.

Rylie Tam has been named the school’s 2022 valedictorian, while Megan Walls is this year’s salutatorian. Earning those tops spots is certainly a significant achievement. But what makes them even more noteworthy is that just two years ago, Rylie’s older brother Ethan was the school’s valedictorian, while Megan’s sister Lacey was the salutatorian.

Principal Dr. Tim Wright says he’s not surprised by the students’ success. He says their families were certainly focused on education and encouraged their children to make the most of their opportunities. But he says the students were also very self-motivated—for example, taking many challenging Advanced Placement courses while at SFHS.

“They all took command of their learning and were always seeking out opportunities to challenge themselves,” said Wright.

Rylie admits she’s always been very competitive, which made the news about being at the top of her class even more gratifying.

“It was always a joke that I would never let Ethan beat me at anything, and so when I found out I was super happy that I accomplished that,” she said. She added that he was also happy to hear the news.

Lacey learned about her younger sister earning salutatorian honors as she was wrapping up the semester at Tuft’s University in Boston, where she’s majoring in economics and sociology.

“I thought it was really hilarious that it worked out that way,” she said. “We all knew each other growing up, we were at High Springs (Community School) together, so it’s cool to see it pan out like this.”

Did her older sister’s salutatorian status in 2020 have an impact on Megan?

“It was motivating, but there was also pressure on top of that,” said Megan, who will be going to Boston University this fall to study environmental science and sociology. “I feel like everyone thought Lacey was the more ‘book smart’ sister, so it was reassuring for me to make it as salutatorian too.”

Rylie said her brother’s achievements motivated her as well.

“Growing up with an older brother, I always wanted to be like him and accomplish what he did, so being able to follow in his footsteps was really cool,” she said.

Rylie has earned a full scholarship to Butler University in Indianapolis to play Division 1 Volleyball and study biology. Her brother Ethan is currently studying anthropology at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

“I think all four of them will attack college just like they did high school,” said principal Wright. “There are no limits to what they can achieve because they’ve always set such high standards for themselves.”

#####