

# Top Students Share Passion for Learning

Words tumble rapid-fire from Brett Weinger's mouth, an indication of his many interests and the speed at which his agile mind processes and relays information.

"I really do enjoy what I'm doing," he says, and this explains the academic success that propelled him to OHS Class of 2017 Valedictorian.

Salutatorian Caroline Longo matches him beat for beat in her speech and enthusiasm as she states that she's "not a math person," while in the next breath listing the rigorous math courses she took to challenge herself. She also studied chemistry and discovered that she loved it.

Fast-talking and high academic GPAs (105.27 for Brett, 104.45 for Caroline) aside, the two also share a passion for learning, a thirst for knowledge, and enough energy to power a rocket.

Consider how they use their spare time. As President of the World Languages Honor Society, Caroline enlisted the support of her fellow officers to raise money for victims of the earthquakes that struck central Italy in August of 2016. She was recognized by the Italian

Consulate for donating more than \$1,500 that she hopes will be used to provide recreational opportunities for children.

Brett developed an extension to an online video game that adapts to players' actions in order to suggest possible next moves. Taking it a step further, he submitted his algorithm to the game's developers, who are exploring how to use it.

Caroline is off to the University of Chicago soon, attracted by its culture of "fearless inquiry" and the freedom it grants students to combine interests for the sheer joy of learning. With her love of art history and interest in chemistry, Caroline is considering a career as a museum curator in which knowledge of art, as well as how best to preserve it for future generations, are vital.

Brett plans to study computer science and economics at Stony Brook University. He has not settled on a career path but believes that the use of artificial intelligence in economics offers many possibilities for someone with his skills and interests.

Like many graduates before them, the two agree that their interests outside of the classroom enhanced their academic pursuits and they encouraged new students to choose from among the many activities, clubs, sports and elective courses offered at OHS.

"Academics always come first, but they're not the only thing," Caroline said and Brett chimed in, advising students to pursue what they love rather than worry about the ideal profile to appeal to college admissions offices.

*Valedictorian Brett Weinger and salutatorian Caroline Longo with their guidance counselors Michele Mellilo (far left) and Lisa Fazio (second from right), and OHS Principal, Geraldine DeCarlo.*

