

Hello Stratton Mountain Class of 2021. My name is Molly Gray, Lt. Governor of Vermont, and Stratton Mountain's Class of \_\_\_\_\_. I am thrilled to be standing here before you today. The class of 2021 has my uttermost respect and admiration.

As I stand here before you all today, we're still in the midst of a global pandemic. It is an honor to be standing before you. I stand up here with the highest of hopes and the greatest of admiration of you all. It's no secret that you, the class of 2021, have had the most unconventional senior year. If you've learned anything this past year, it should be that you have the power to rebuild this world to its fullest potential.

I know a lot of you must be worried for the future. Don't be. You should be thrilled. Your generation has an unbelievable opportunity to take the world as it is and make it your own, a place that you are truly proud to live in.

You might not be having the most typical graduation. Covid-19 will not stand in the way of your hopes and dreams. The world is only improving from here, as are you. Your work, determination, struggles, have not gone unnoticed. Make the impossible possible.

2021 once seemed like a million miles away. When you started high school, 2021 still seemed so far away. You were so excited to be a senior. Then, in the middle of your junior year, Covid-19 changed everything. While the world seemed to be slowing down, your high school career seemed to progress so fast. The last first day of school came much faster than you expected. You will take your last test, submit your last paper, go to your last dance, and ski for the last time as a high school student.

It seems like just yesterday I too was in this gymnasium, waiting to get my high school diploma so I could go on to the next steps in my life. I would ski again at the University of Vermont, and I would never forget where I came from, the memories I'd shared, the teachers I'd had. That's how I stand before you today, never forget where you came from, no matter how far you go.

Some of you will immediately enter the workforce after graduation, some of you will leave Vermont, some of you will go to college, or trade school, or even a tech program. But I urge you to remember this past year, really the past twelve years. Look around you, look at the people you've been surrounded by. For some, the past four years, but for others, your whole lives.

Not to get sappy, but wherever this life takes you, please remember that you will always have a place here in Vermont. Right now, you may feel stuck, you want to spread your wings outside of this state to see a world you've never seen. But, when and if you choose, Vermont will welcome you back. Vermont needs you, it needs the young generation like you to help it recover stronger than ever from this pandemic. I know I already said that the world is yours to change, but I mean it. And if the world feels too big to change on your own, little Vermont can certainly use your help.