



BROCKTON HIGH SCHOOL PHOTOS

■ Brockton High School graduates, from left, Alicia Ortiz, Erica Stults, Michelle Dang, Julie Shapiro, Andressa Mota and Christine Harrington Brandon returned to the school to participate in the BHS Champion Science Alumni event.

BHS CHAMPION SCIENCE ALUMNI

'There is a point to everything'

Six BHS graduates share their experiences of high school, undergraduate studies and pursuit of doctorates

What do you want to be when you grow up? The six presenters at last week's BHS Champion Science Alumni event all said they did not know the answer to that question when they went to college, but now they know and they love what they do.

The event was another example of how teachers within the science department at the high school are helping students explore various fields and open their eyes to future possibilities.

Mrs. Voorhis, one of the school's biology teachers, coordinated the event and invited other classes and students in directed academics to join her in the Little Theatre to hear the stories of each speaker.

The theater filled to capacity for both presentations as students and teachers enjoyed the opportunity to listen to the six presentations that broadened their scientific knowledge and understanding of research at the university level.

The speakers all graduated from BHS between 2005 and 2008 and included Julie Shapiro, PhD student in ecology at the University of Florida; Michelle Dang, PhD candidate in biological and biomedical sciences at Harvard; Alicia Ortiz, PhD student in chemistry and chemical biology at Northeastern University; Christine Brandon, PhD candidate in geoscience at UMass Amherst; Erica Stults, PhD candidate in engineering at Worcester Polytechnical Institute; and Andressa Mota, PhD student in molecular cell biology and biochemistry at Boston University.



■ Andressa Mota, a PhD student in molecular cell biology and biochemistry at Boston University, addresses the students gathered in the Little Theatre at Brockton High School.

Each presenter shared her background as a student at BHS, undergraduate experiences and pursuit of a doctorate in very diverse and specified fields of science.

"I love what I do. It's hard but I want to learn and in science there is a point to everything even when you don't know what it is," said Julie Shapiro, who opened with these re-

marks as she shared how she overcame the difficulties of finding a place to do her research to eventually study various species of bats.

"Don't think you have to know or be good at everything. Don't let that stop you. It just means you have to work harder and work with others," she went on to tell the students as she showed pictures of research she has

conducted in several locations around the world.

Alicia Ortiz shared her work studying mutated proteins. She explained this was not the path that she originally thought she would take so she encouraged students, "if you want to be a scientist, try everything."

Erica Stults shared similar advice as she explained how she wanted to solve



COMMENTARY
SHARON WOLDER

problems, build and break things. Her path has led to a focus on renewable energy and studying how the Earth uses part of its water supply.

For Christine Brandon, she realized that the field she ultimately wanted to pursue required a strong background in other areas leading her to her current area of study, which includes analyzing rocks and sands for what she explained as, "the stories they tell about past storms."

The visuals provided by Andressa Mota and Michelle Dang gave students a peek in the work being done in the areas of cancer research.

Andressa told the students, "You have all these cells and they all know where to go. I want to know how they know."

Michelle shared how her research focused on cancer treatments and why some cancers return.

The event was a powerful way to help students see what they do in their classes currently prepare them for future learning experiences and opportunities. It was wonderful to see the students return to their alma mater give back in ways that will encourage others to follow in their footsteps.

Sharon Wolder is the principal of Brockton High School.

Research topics were highlight

By Brianna Louis-Jeanne
IB BIOLOGY STUDENT, CLASS OF 2015

The presentations that were made by the doctoral students were absolutely phenomenal!

I was pleased to see that Brockton High School alumni have taken on interesting research projects in the field of science. They introduced us to a large variety of different fields within science as well as shared their research projects with us.

By far, the most interesting part of the presentation was their research projects

because each one was so different and unique.

The topics of their research ranged from studying the effect of bats on humans to analyzing sand to discover more about the history of the planet's weather.

Last but not least, it was great to see that our presenters were all successful women who overcame the barrier of going into a male-dominated field. I wish each and every one of them success in their future endeavors and hope to one day be as well-established and successful as each of them.

Personal 'aha' moment recharges teacher

By Joyce Forand-Voorhis
BHS BIOLOGY TEACHER

Being a teacher is a multi-faceted profession. There are times when I am a mentor, a shaper, a mirror, a challenger. In any given day I feel like a leader, a learner, a grandmother, a friend, and sometimes a haunt.

But, there is no profession with greater rewards. All teachers know the feeling of watching a student's face at the "aha" moment – when understanding breaks through. It is those moments that make the long hours of planning, correcting, re-explaining worthwhile. And once in a while, students return from years past and the blessings of this professional choice become apparent.

Six wonderful students, alumnae of Brockton High, who broke their "science teeth" on our old lab benches, returned to

These science professionals were unique, informative, composed, passionate and exceptional presenters.

BHS last Thursday to tell their stories of how they arrived to their positions in doctoral programs in science.

Thanks to Julie Shapiro, PhD candidate at the University of Florida, the concept of a panel of BHS alumnae who had made it through to the level of their own research projects in science became a reality. As I worked with Julie, I imagined that the program would be a worthwhile effort, but in reality, it was a remarkable event.

These science professionals were unique,

informative, composed, passionate and exceptional presenters. It was not that long ago that they had been in the audience of the Little Theatre, so they were high-school-student friendly.

As the presentations were made, I was moved by their poise and maturity and by the attention and interest of the audience. It was an "aha" moment for me when I realized that the sweat equity of the presenters, and of the teachers, mentors and parents who had prepared and supported these students along the way had paid off.

I went home at the end of the day recharged. Although our society faces many challenges, and unknown questions lie ahead, we are in very creative and capable hands. Let us support and celebrate the future, not fear it. And as an entire Brockton community, let us continue to be the spark for those currently in our charge.