

Senior year is supposed to be a special time for high schoolers. Attending their last prom, walking across the stage at graduation, and hanging out with their friends before everyone goes their separate ways off to college, work, or wherever life takes them.

But due to the COVID-19 crisis, this year's seniors had a different experience as Hoover high school, like most schools in the nation, moved to remote learning during the last few months of school. To help make their senior year experience better, North Canton residents have banded together to make these students feel special.

North Canton resident, Holly Pierpont started the Adopt a North Canton Hoover High School Senior Facebook group so friends and family of Hoover seniors can post about the student's accomplishments and their future plans. Members of the group can then "adopt" a student by getting them a gift such as gift cards, baked goods, or small presents.

Despite not having a child who is a senior at Hoover, Pierpont and her husband have volunteered for several North Canton organizations throughout the year and wanted to find a way to support the seniors they've helped.

"I had been trying to figure out a way to organize a spreadsheet for people to sign up and adopt a senior, but when I realized that Facebook groups were popping up nationwide, I knew this was the ideal way to do it," Pierpont said. "I was sitting in the drive-thru at Cane's and pulled out my phone and quickly created the group, not knowing if it would really take off. Within minutes, the first senior to be adopted was posted by a parent."

One of these seniors to be adopted was Pedro Tula who plans to go to The Ohio State University in the Fall to study finance and accounting. He was adopted by family friend, Matthew Wolfe.

Despite not having a Hoover senior of their own, Wolfe and his wife still wanted to give back to the community and to the seniors who are missing out.

"Our family just felt as if adopting a Senior was the right to do," Wolfe said. "We knew Pedro and the whole Tula family for a while, so we were ecstatic when we saw his "adoption page" pop up. But the outpouring of support from the community, schools and the city has been amazing. Providing these Seniors with a reason to smile, even for a day, was the least any of us could do."

Pierpont, who is a Hoover graduate herself, has been blown away by the support for the page but is not shocked by the outpouring of kindness.

"The group grew to over 800 members in 48 hours, and now has over 1000 members," Pierpont said. "I knew that we had people in the community who wanted to do something for the seniors, but I was blown away at how quickly it gained attention. Parents were posting about their seniors, and group members were adopting them within seconds. I am not surprised, because North Canton takes care of its own."

This also did not come as a surprise to Wolfe.

"Honestly, the tremendous support for these Seniors does not surprise me," Wolfe said. "North Canton is a great community that really goes above and beyond for those in need. It's a tough time for everyone, but when this community sees someone going through a rough time, we know it's our responsibility as Vikings to help. So not only do we want to congratulate these Seniors on their academic successes, we want to say thank you for being a part of this

community. We had to do something to commemorate their senior year, but we surely wanted to say 'thank you' for being a part of this community."

In this time of uncertainty, community members have stepped up to honor these seniors' accomplishments and all of their hard work throughout their time at Hoover. For Pierpont, she never expected anything less.

"There is so much uncertainty in the world right now, and the risk associated with COVID-19 has unfortunately canceled a major milestone for these graduates," she said. "But a simple act of kindness can go a long way to make them feel special. I am somewhat of an optimist in all things, and this has served as a strong example of the way friends and families will come forward and do wonderful things when the opportunity is presented."