

Long Island's 2008 valedictorians 10 years later

By Rachel Weiss and Joe Diglio

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Newsday caught up with some of Long Island's high school valedictorians from 2008.

Their journeys from high school to college and their professional careers have seen them change job aspirations, cities and perspective. These experiences have covered fields from law to teaching and taken them all across the country.

Read about their stories, the lessons they've learned over the last decade and their advice for today's graduates.

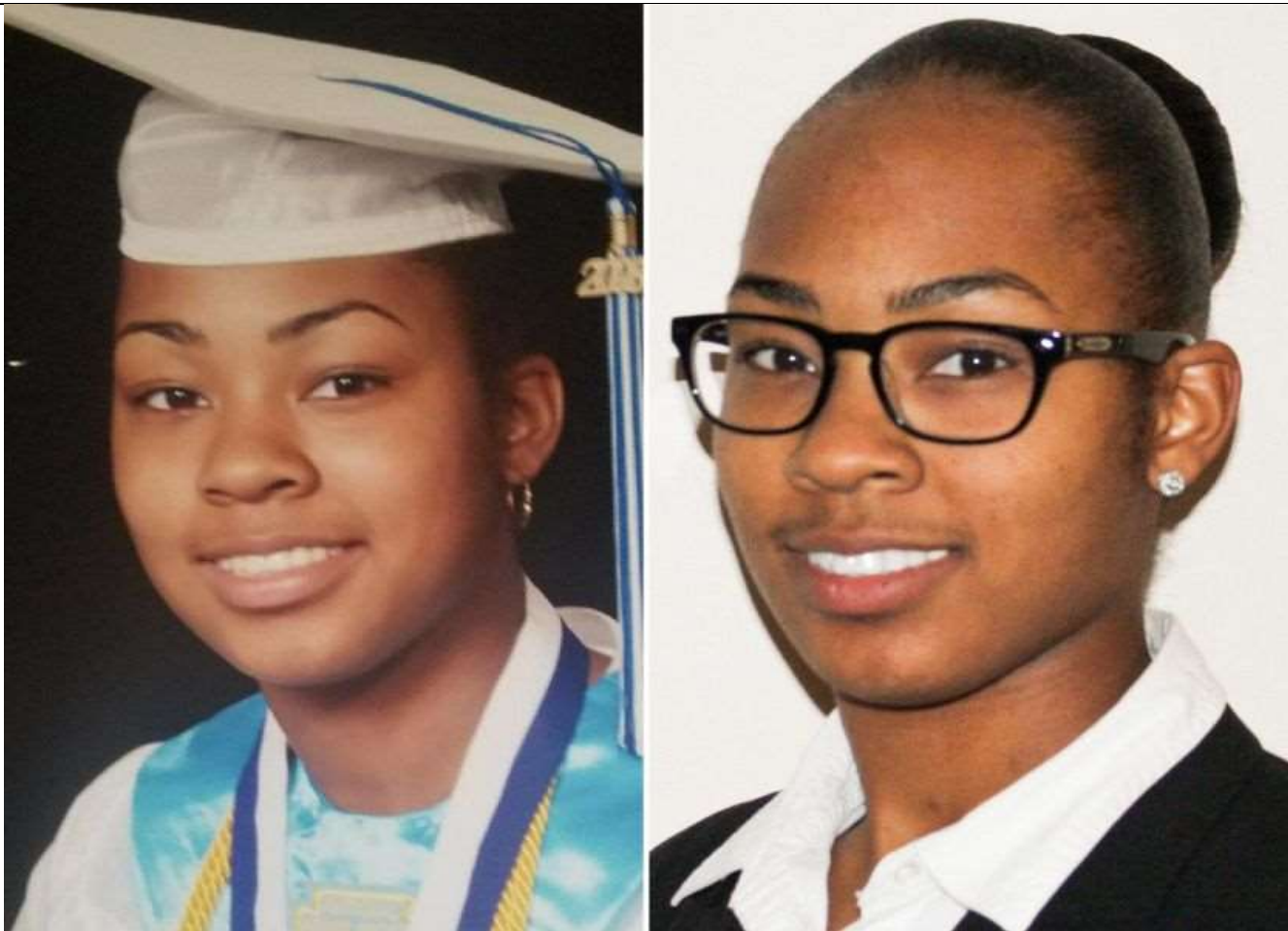


Photo Credit: Courtesy Brittany Dukes

High School: Hempstead High School

College: SUNY Albany, Class of 2012

Job: Medical student at Saint Louis University

Lives in: St. Louis, Missouri

Hempstead High School's 2008 valedictorian, Brittany Dukes, said she initially wanted to be an actuary. She attended SUNY Albany and earned her degree in actuarial science and mathematics, but had a change of plans after graduation.

"I graduated college and worked for an insurance company for a year when I realized that office life wasn't for me," Dukes said. "I then begin to pursue a career in medicine."

Dukes completed a post-baccalaureate program at Stony Brook University, and then started applying for medical schools. Now, she is about to finish her third year at Saint Louis University School of Medicine.

While reflecting on the past decade, Dukes said, "I have learned to stay true to myself and to be confident in the goals I have set for myself."

She added that her experience at Hempstead High School taught her that through hard work and determination, anything is possible.

"Plans change," Dukes said. "Try to always follow your passion."
