



Counselor Letter of Recommendation for Andrew Sveda

When Andrew (also Drew) Sveda ran for Junior class President, he ran on a five-point platform, an action plan to make things happen. And that he did. When he ran again last spring as Senior class President, his classmates were overwhelmingly moved to vote for him again, as he is a student who garners maximum respect and support from all those around him at all times, peers and faculty alike. It's not just *that* he naturally leads, but *how* he leads that allows him to seamlessly build relationships across factions and make meaningful contributions on all levels. Initially, an outsider might be surprised to see that this formally-dressed, lunchbox-toting, newspaper-reading young person with top academics would also be the person to almost single-handedly plan the prom among other social events for his class and the larger school community. Andrew is someone with such deep empathy and who exhibits such kindness towards all, that people cannot help but respect and admire him. Drew came to Shady Side Academy (SSA) in 6th grade from a smaller independent school closer to his home. Following just one year behind his brother, Robby, with whom he is very close, Drew has always had a strong sense of self and an identity separate from him. They are similar in many ways, yet unlike most sibling pairings, Drew has never seen their closeness in age or similarities in some interests as any sort of competition. They are both strong, independent thinkers and in addition to his close and supportive family, he is grounded in his faith, which he attributes as a key component of his identity.

There are very few students who earn grades that put their GPA above a 4.0 at SSA, but Drew is one of them. Not only does he earn top grades within his very strong class, but he has done so in a curriculum that is among the most challenging one can take at Shady Side. In his junior year, Drew was enrolled in AP Calculus BC as well as Advanced Biology, two classes that are typically senior classes. His Biology teacher says, "*His pursuit of mastery is relentless.*" All of his teachers talk about the pleasure they derive in having Drew in their class because he's motivated to learn and works well with others. Chinese is another area where Drew has challenged himself, staying on track in our most advanced offering by taking AP Chinese in his senior year. All of these classes are important to Drew even though history is his main area of passion. He is quick and excited to apply themes from history to modern events in the world. For his major junior US History paper, Drew selected to write about the role of religion in Reagan's presidency, a topic that makes sense for someone who thinks about the role of his own religion as he thinks and leads. The respect that Drew has earned as a leader in the school is seen in every classroom environment of which he is a part. He is driven to learn and grow by seeking maximum challenge and rising to it.

Leadership comes naturally for Drew. His efforts and courage to identify what the school community needs and dive in to those areas is impressive. His list of involvements is deep and broad, but I will highlight two areas that illustrate Drew's character. Theater is an area that is outside of Drew's immediate comfort zone, but also an area where he has grown so much over the years. In the junior fall play, Drew played the role of a man whose marriage is falling apart, not easy for a teenager. But the theater director highlighted how you would have never known how awkward that role could have felt for a high school student because of Drew's "old soul." He went on to perform in the winter musical and has continued his theater work into senior year as well. Model U.N. is also a major area of involvement for Drew. In this activity, he is able to marry his passion for history, his desire to stay updated on all world events, and his natural leadership. He has led this group, recruited new members, and helped to show the entire school community how exciting it can be to work in a group on world affairs. When Drew is involved, he gives his full attention and engagement. His impact in everything of which he is a part is significant and long-lasting.

At the end of each year, the faculty spends hours talking about students for different awards. Though the awards vary, character, leadership, exemplary scholarship and overall citizenship make up almost every award; last spring, Drew's name came up in nomination and discussion time and time again. Drew is an all-around standout student and community member and we will be sad to see him graduate. We recommend Andrew Sveda with our highest level of support for this honor.

Lauren Lieberman
Director of College Counseling