

Badger School Graduate

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"Then after a year, they finally convinced us to just move to Badger because it's just better to raise a family there," Aulona said. "... So then that's where we ended up."

During that eight-day visit to Badger, Besfort described how he disliked the area at first, but quickly realized it was the place for his family.

"I was like, man, I want to go back to New York, because there is nothing here. It's all flat," Besfort said. "And then we went there and that's how we decided—just for a better life and better to raise your kids—it's amazing here."

Moving to the U.S., Aulona said she and her brother knew barely any English, having to go to speech classes in New York. Avdyl estimated that in under three months they had ended up catching on to the English language "pretty well." It just continued to get better.

Getting accustomed to America did bring some challenges, but Aulona acknowledged that it was surely harder for her parents than for them.

"I'm sure for Avdyl and I, it was easier because we were so young. It was easier to acculturate," Aulona said. "But for my parents, I know it was harder, because they're away from their family. They're away from their parents, their sisters or brothers."

Avdyl talked about these sacrifices further. "We didn't have a lot and my parents had to say goodbye to everything they knew to offer us that better life," Avdyl said. "And I mean it was hard, and especially in New York, because it's like really hard to immigrate there, especially because of how expensive it is in there."

But, he said his parents worked really hard to get to where they are at now. Their dad works for TECHniques in Roseau, helping manufacture parts for Polaris, and their mom works for Oak Crest Senior Housing in Roseau.

"They made a lot of sacrifices along the way," Avdyl said, "to provide us with everything that any other American kid would have."

Aulona described what her parents did to bring their family from the very bottom to the top.

"They gave up everything. I mean, saying goodbye to their parents, saying goodbye to their culture," Aulona said. "I know I couldn't say goodbye to my parents right now. And for them to do it just a couple years older than Avdyl is just really hard."

Besides moving to a new country, the family also had to get used to living in a smaller community, having lived in larger communities in Kosovo and New York.

"You live in this big city your whole life, a bigger city, and then you come to Badger with a population of 375," Aulona said. "And it's kind of like a culture shock because all up here it's like hunting and fishing... We didn't have that in New York. We didn't have that in Kosovo."

In New York, Avdyl described how the classes were a little bigger, leading to less one-on-one time. In Badger, being a smaller community, he said the teachers take more time to get to know their students. He described how his first year of school in Badger, as a second grader, was better.

"I didn't have too many friends in New York," Avdyl said, "but the first day or first couple days, I already made a bunch of friends in Badger, so it was way better for us kids."

The family moved to Badger on June 28, 2010. As Avdyl stated in his graduation speech, he remembers his first day at the Badger School, a day he came to realize what type of school he was entering. He was lost on that first day, unable to find his second grade classroom. He asked Mrs. Byfluglien, the third grade teacher at that time, where the second grade room was.

"She told me the directions, I entered the classroom, and sat down. That's when Mrs. Dostal asked Dawson (Beito) to bring me to the lunch room for breakfast," Avdyl said during his graduation speech. "That's when I knew that Badger School would be a way better (school) than the last school I was enrolled in. This generous hospitality was something I never received in New York."

At Badger School, both Avdyl and Aulona have been involved in various activities. Avdyl

has participated in knowledge bowl, robotics, National Honor Society, band, choir, golf math league, and Envirothon. Aulona has gotten involved in volleyball, robotics, knowledge bowl, National Honor Society, band, and choir. Their younger brother, Aaron, who was born in Roseau, Minn., and will be a fifth grader next fall, has also found success and opportunities at the Badger School.

What was once a foreign place, in Badger, has now become something different for the Jasiqi family.

"It's just our home," Aulona said. "I feel... as comfortable as I can be here in Badger and we all do."

Asked about the emotion, he displayed during his speech, he got emotional in his response this time around too. He explained how it was already an emotional day to start with, but thinking about everything his parents did to get him to where he was added to that emotion. He's proud of what his parents did, but sad for them for what they had to sacrifice along the way.

"It just makes me really proud that they're my parents and that, sorry," Avdyl said, getting choked up, "... they sacrificed a lot of what they knew for us. And it just gets to me because I know that I try really hard to make them proud of me, so what they did doesn't go in vain. So I just tried to repay them back with taking every chance I can to make them proud."

Besides his immediate family, Curt and Diann Hauger were also invited to the graduation as two of Avdyl's nine guests. Aulona said they consider the Haugers as grandparents.

Speaking of that day, Aulona tried to tell herself not to cry all of graduation day, but she was unsuccessful, describing herself as a "wreck."

"Avdyl is my best friend. We've confided in each other as soon as we moved to America, and to see him up on that stage, giving a farewell speech, getting those scholarships, getting the diploma... it was kind of for me (thinking) that'll be me next year," Aulona said. "... I was just really like (thinking) he did it."

She remembers when they first moved here as young children and now she has watched her brother, her friend, become this accomplished person. Avdyl will be attending the University of Minnesota Duluth next fall, where he plans to major in chemical engineering and possibly minor in biochemistry to get into the pharmaceutical field.

A senior next fall at Badger High School, Aulona wants to attend the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities, looking to major in something health-related.

Asked what it meant to be a first-generation American graduate, Avdyl described it as an "honor."

"I feel really proud that I am (a first-generation American high school graduate). And, I go into it... looking at it with a really big outlook and knowing that I can do anything in the future," Jasiqi said. "So it just gives me high hopes and makes me really happy that I can open the pathway for generations of our family members."

Aulona looked at graduating as a first-generation American as facing and defeating those obstacles.

"We came here with no knowledge of what we were doing and we've both become, I would say, accomplished students in the community too. And, I mean, to be able to graduate... for me, I think of it as like, we can do it," Aulona said. "We can do anything we set our minds to and... anyone else who's in our shoes, little kids who are immigrating to America, they can do it too."

Avdyl ended his farewell speech with the following line, "But as Winnie the Pooh once said, 'How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.'"

He may be saying goodbye to Badger, but he is also saying hello to future opportunities. His parents made the decision to say goodbye to everything they knew, making that moment on that graduation stage and all their children's successes following it possible.



Badger High School graduate Avdyl Jasiqi poses with his family at the Badger Graduation Ceremony on May 23. Avdyl is proud to have the parents he has, highlighting how they sacrificed much of what they knew for him and his siblings. Pictured are (L-R): sister Aulona, mom Gjevahire, Avdyl, brother Aaron, and dad Besfort.

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