

Students face challenges, achieve success in the end

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For some students who weren't successful the first time through high school the old adage, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again," is an understatement. At graduation ceremonies for Farmington Schools' adult and alternative education classes, students talked about distractions, snags and stumbling blocks.

They achieved success in the end.

"I was at the point where I was almost about to give up," said Elijah Frederick Connor, a Farmington Community School graduate, after the ceremony.

He didn't graduate with his class in 2001. The first go-round there were problems with his grades and he "got into it" with his parents.

"I didn't want to come back because of the humiliation," Connor said. "Not to graduate, I couldn't go through that again."

At the Community School, he worked hard, so hard he went to both daytime and night-time classes.

"I was doing a full load," Connor said. "I was going from 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. and 5:30-9:30 p.m. I had to quit my job at the Gucci store at Somerset."

Academic Advisors Pat Karns and Terri Haas told him not to give up and that he could do it. And he did.



Words of wisdom: Graduate Jennifer Chism was one of three in the class to offer a brief address to their classmates.

Connor expects to soon leave for New York where he has a modeling contract with Kenneth Cole.

"I'm going to school part time," Connor said. "I plan to be a lawyer."

Allison Ann Wiens also would have been a 2001 graduate. Grades and homework were a problem the first time.

"They told me I didn't have enough credits to graduate," Wiens said.

She thought going to Farmington Community School was easier than regular high school. "You don't feel like a high school drop out," Wiens said. "It's a second chance. I struggled a lot less."

Teachers devoted more time to students, she said. "There were less students. It was a lot of fun."

Her next step is cosmetology school in Chicago.

The June 11 ceremony at Farmington High School lauded 78 graduates — 51 were from the high school completion program at Farmington Community School; the remainder, from the Farmington Alternative Academy.

"All of you in one way or another have accomplished a milestone in your life, a turnaround of sorts," said Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield.

"The fact that you are here tonight is a tribute of your willingness to overcome a variety of obstacles."

The students could celebrate joy now because many had experienced sadness and setback, he said. They committed to hard work and sacrifice in order to get their diploma.

Maxfield quoted from a composition called "When Children Learn."

"They learn that they cannot control the world around them but they can master their own soul."

The credit earned is not for the graduates alone but needs to be shared with the people who supported them, those who encouraged them to start all over again, Maxfield said.

The efforts of school staff who didn't give up on them ensured their presence that night.

Board President Cathy Webb said the annual adult education/alternative academy graduation is one which truly touches board members' hearts.

"In a year of heroes, we are surrounded by many heroes tonight," Webb said. "Your family and friends know some of the major obstacles you have had to overcome. They are your heroes."



Celebrity moment?: Adult grad Elvis Kesto gets a handshake from State Rep. Andrew "Rocky" Raczkowski.

cherish them." Webb encouraged the students to also consider the teacher who really inspired them, the teacher who would never let them do anything but their best. "They, too, are heroes who help students succeed," she said.

ALTERNATIVE ACADEMY/COMMUNITY SCHOOL GRADS

Farmington Alternative Academy/Farmington Community School 2002 graduates include: Chava Abrams, Veronica Aguilar, Neil Alkamo, Amber Allison, Jamie Belcher, Anika Bonaparte, Danielle Brown, Jennifer Chism, Elijah Connor, Victor Dabish, Aaron Davis, Joseph DeGrave, Tara Deichert, Darla DiClemente, Andrea DiGiglio, Joseph Dodds, Michael Douglas, Keri Firestone, Josh Friedman, Daniel Garavaglia, Andrea Gilbeau, Laura Glenn and Matt Glowacki. Jenni Gould, Gregory Graham, Nicholas Guest, Dani Hanna, Bradley Heraghty, Daniel Hickcox, Sarah Huston, Paul Jacob, Carla Jefferson, Kevin Johnson, Marie Julet, Emily Kallgren, Elvis Kesto, Vanessa Kesto, Brian Kozaneki, Mark Lane and

Michael Laymond. Lita L'Esperance, Jason Lessor, F. Christopher McDavid, Melissa Miracle, Katie Montmorency, Michael Louis Moye, Alan Nicholas, Joseph Oliveira, Jessica Papp, Aleksei Pavlov, Natasha Pernell, Kamarr Pierce, Stephanie Poe, Pamela Porter, Matthew Poulson, Michael Poulson and Anthony Robinette. Timothy Robinette, Brian Rorai, Gretchen Schnelle, Garrett Segal, Francheska Shikambi, John Siegwald, Shannon Small, Jeremiah Smith, Jonathon Smith, Emily Spalter, Kathleen Stevens, Jessica Tolson, Alec Tomasin, Kristen Vestrand, Blair Weiss, Samuel Wells, Allison Wiens, Zachary Wish and Jason Yono.



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Passages: Adult grads change the tassels on their mortarboards to signify that they are now graduates.

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