

Keefe Tech grads urged to write their own stories

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FRAMINGHAM — As he prepared to leave the halls of Keefe Tech, graduating senior Brian Burns issued a challenge to his classmates.

“All the world’s greatest athletes, scientists and public heroes began exactly like us,” Burns said. “A blank book. A story yet to be written. And look where they are now. From rags to riches. From nobody to somebody. All have taken control and composed their own stories.”

Burns, president of the National Honor Society, urged his peers to realize their potential during Joseph P. Keefe Regional Technical School’s graduation ceremony on Saturday.

Burns, who plans to pursue a degree in engineering from the Wentworth Institute of Technology, said icons like Michael Jordan, rapper Jay Z, and author J.K. Rowling, who penned the Harry Potter series, overcame obstacles to achieve their goals.

Adversity was part of their story, but not the final chapter, he said, calling on his classmates to make the most of the years ahead.

“What I want to be able to do is turn on the TV 10 years from now and see you in all your glory,” Burns said. “And I promise you I will be proud.”

Parents lined the bleachers and filled rows of blue chairs on the floor of Keefe Tech’s gymnasium for the school’s 44th Commencement Exercises. A white banner hung from a basketball hoop above the stage, which was decorated with orange, white and blue balloons. They framed a podium in the center, where students were called one-by-one to receive their diplomas.

Keefe Tech's class of 2017 includes 127 students. Nearly 70 percent will pursue college degrees at institutions including Framingham State University, Massachusetts Bay Community College, UMass Amherst, Northeastern, Arizona State, the University of Maine and Roger Williams.

Four students will join the military after graduation. Others have secured professional licenses and logged hundreds of hours in apprenticeships, giving them a pathway to land jobs after high school. Superintendent-Director Jonathan Evans said the range of opportunities is a testament to the strength of career technical education.

School Committee Chairman Michael Rossi, Class President Katelin Copithorne, Valedictorian Simone McHugh and Salutatorian Makayla Hicks also offered remarks during Saturday's ceremony.

Hicks recalled the daunting decision students faced when they chose to attend a regional vocational school four years ago. After leaving behind her friends, Hicks said her first few months as a freshman were intimidating. Over time, she grew more comfortable and developed an interest in programming and web design. Hicks said it was empowering to choose her own career path.

While students again face an uncertain future, Hicks said high school gave them the knowledge and skills to succeed.

"It'll be just like the day we walked through the doors of Keefe for the first time," she said. "We have no idea what's to come, but we will persevere. We have to embrace the uncertainty — embrace the fear of what is to come, just as we did when we entered Keefe Tech."

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