

The METROWEST DAILY NEWS

Keefe Tech grads embrace their inner 'geek' in Framingham



Jonathan Phelps @JPhelps_MW

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FRAMINGHAM — A year after moving here from Zimbabwe, Mary-Ann Mufute remembers walking into Keefe Regional Technical School overwhelmed and afraid. But four years later, she confidently stood in front of her classmates at graduation to give a speech as salutatorian.

“I realize that we all have potential to do something more, to be great,” she said. “It just takes a little bravery to break out of our shells. Fear limits our potential to go above and beyond as citizens of the world.”

She joined 154 fellow classmates to graduate during the school's 45th commencement ceremony. Inside the gymnasium, family and friends brought oversized balloons and air horns to celebrate as names were called.

Superintendent-Director Jonathan Evans said about 65 percent of the class is going to college next year and two have enlisted in the Army. The class collectively earned \$300,000 in wages for their work through the school's programs.

"You have served our communities and made a real difference for those in need," Evans said. "You've already made the world a better place."

Ashland Police Sgt. Ed Burman, who serves as School Committee chairman, never imagined becoming a police officer after graduating from the school in 1981.

"I will tell you that because you decided to go to Keefe Tech you have positioned yourself to do just about anything you want to do," he said. "Keefe Tech is going to be the foundation that you will fall back on for the rest of your life."

Valedictorian Bridgette Katlyn Paredes remembers being called a "geek" in fifth grade.

"At the time, I thought this was a very hurtful insult. Now as I have grown and matured, I wish I could go back and thank them because there is nothing else I'd rather be than myself... We are all 'geeks' in our own way. We express ourselves in the most creative ways and we have an impact on those around us."

On his mortarboard, Jeremy Quinones paid tribute to the people in his life who helped him through the years, including his mother, Angelica Valle, who died in 2012. "My reason," he wrote.

"I wanted to do it for her," he said as he showed the picture glued to the top of the cap. "I know she is looking down on me in this moment."

He said the school helped him excel in his endeavor to become an electrician and run his own business. He will go to Framingham State University to study business information technology after being recruited to play on the football team.

On her cap, Alyssa Severino wrote: "She believed she could and she did."

"I had little moments where I wanted to give up, but I didn't give up," she said. "My family kept pushing me and I did it."

Mufute is headed to Boston College to major in biology on a pre-med track. She hopes to work as a traveling doctor to help patients in underdeveloped countries.

"It is easy to stay in one place to not challenge yourself," she said. "I believe every graduate here today in this room has a purpose on this planet. Don't be afraid to be great."

Jonathan Phelps can be reached at 508-626-4338 or jphelps@wickedlocal.com. Follow him on Twitter @JPhelps_MW.

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