

# Lowell's Joyce Philippe is bound for West Point

First Greater Lowell Technical High School student selected



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LOWELL — After graduating from Lowell Greater Lowell Technical High School in June 2024, Joyce Philippe will begin a journey that only a few people are selected to make.

She'll be packing her bags for the trip south to become a cadet in the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School at West Point, New York. She will spend one year studying with the elite student body, preparing for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. She is the first GLTHS student accepted to attend the storied military academy that was founded in 1802.

On Tuesday, Capt. Wilfred Ahoua, diversity outreach officer for West Point, visited the school to talk about the application process, and to honor Philippe's accomplishment.

"We are so proud of Joyce and we appreciate Captain Ahoua for taking the time to encourage even more of our students to consider a career in the U.S. Military," Superintendent Jill Davis said in a statement. "The Greater Lowell area is one of the

most diverse in our state and has an important role to play in ensuring that the diversity of our military reflects that of the country.”

In addition to Philippe and her family, the event was attended by staff and students of GLTHS and Jorge Morales Lopez, the constituent adviser for U.S. Rep. Lori Trahan, who presented her with an award.

“I’m thankful for everybody showing up and for the kids at my school to learn about West Point,” Philippe said by phone after the morning ceremony.

Each June through Oct. 31, Trahan’s office begins the process of accepting, vetting and nominating 10 applicants each to four of the nation’s five U.S. service academies — West Point, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy and the Merchant Marine Academy.

Trahan started her congressional career serving on the Armed Services Committee, and she has previously described nominating students to service institutions as “one of my greatest honors.”

Students must submit three letters of recommendation, a resume of extracurricular activities, an official high school transcript, SAT and/or ACT scores, and a 500-word essay on attending a service academy. It’s a rigorous process with hard deadlines and no room for error.

But Philippe said she’s used to challenges. In 2016, when she was 8 years old, her parents, Marc and Jessy, moved the family from Haiti to the U.S. The family dropped into a new country, climate, culture and language. The then-third grader spoke Haitian Creole and was learning French in school, but did not speak English. The Philippes eventually landed in Lowell, where Joyce entered fifth grade at the Wang Middle School.





“When I first came here, I was very clueless and felt intimidated not to be able to understand those around me and my peers,” Philippe said. “But after like a year, with the help of my family, English was an easy thing to learn.”

The now-trilingual student excelled in the classroom and on the athletic field. Philippe chose GLTHS because she wanted the benefits of a strong academic program and a technical education.

“Technical school is more difficult because of the rigorous and fast-paced academic curriculum that is balanced with a full technical education in the same amount of

time as traditional high schools,” she said in a school statement.

On the athletic field, Philippe has represented the Greater Lowell Tech Gryphons on the varsity track and field and varsity cross-country teams all four years, breaking many school and personal records.

She was selected as the most valuable player for outdoor track and the Continental Athletic Conference league team state champion in spring 2023, as well as qualified to participate in the Adidas Nationals Competition in Greensboro, North Carolina in June 2023. As a senior, Philippe was selected as captain for the cross-country team and MVP for indoor track.

The 18-year-old hopes her year-round rigorous sports schedule will prepare her for the grueling basic training that she reports to in July. She also plans to try out for the Army Black Knights track team.

“I’m talking to one of the track coaches at West Point, and he’s given me so many tips to get prepared for Cadet Candidate Basic Training,” Philippe said.

She also credits her teammates and classmates with developing the kind of leadership skills the military looks for in applicants.

“Being surrounded by a bunch of kids who have the same mindset as me kind of like prepared me to go to West Point,” Philippe said. “The whole point at West Point is preparing you to be a leader of character.”

Character is what Trahan saw when Philippe’s name was presented to her for nomination by a nine-member Service Academy board comprised of past and present military members.

“Joyce’s hard work, dedication, and relentlessness are what I look for in a young person hoping to serve our country,” Trahan said by text on Tuesday. “Joyce is a remarkable young woman who represents the very best that our community and our Commonwealth have to offer. Like so many in Lowell, she and her family embody the American Dream, folks who know the better future they want for themselves and their loved ones and work tirelessly to achieve it.”

The Centralville resident still has to finish the coursework for her senior year and is looking forward to the spring track season. She plans on pursuing a degree in psychiatry, and said she wants to work with military servicemembers and veterans.

But Philippe says she wouldn’t be where she is without the people in her life — her family, her middle school physical education teacher, Lisa Kattar, who got her interested in track; her GLTHS counselor Carissa Mrouse; Morales Lopez and Trahan, among so many others.

“It’s all about reaching out to those around you who can help you, than to try and figure it out on your own,” Philippe said.

