

Lifelong Learning Center holds 37th graduation

Speakers discuss road to Maryland diploma

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The month of October isn't generally associated with graduations — and despite the gowns and tassels, the event Thursday evening

at North Point High School was not your typical graduation ceremony, either.

"This graduation ceremony celebrates a special and joyous occasion that has been many years in the

making," said Lititia Warren, instructional specialist at the Lifelong Learning Center.

The center, housed at the Robert D. Stethem Educational Center, held its 37th

annual Graduation Ceremony Thursday to recognize all those who had attained a Maryland State Diploma through successful completion of the General Educational Development (GED) or National External Diploma Program (NEDP) ex-

aminations during the 2015-2016 school year.

There were a total of 109 graduates during the previous school year, but only 37 attended the graduation

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ceremony, along with their families, friends and staff.

The Charles County Adult Education Program, operated through the Lifelong Learning Center, offers daytime and evening classes for GED and NEDP preparation, as well as English as a second language (ESL), basic skills training, career pathways and citizenship classes, according to its website.

Sen. Thomas "Mac" Middleton (D-Charles) congratulated students on their accomplishments.

"Of all the graduations that I go to, this is my very, very favorite, because these students realize that in order to get ahead in life, they've got to have that degree and that diploma," Middleton said. "For many of you, this is going to be just the first of many steps forward."

Charles County Public Schools Superintendent Kimberly Hill commended students for their accomplishments.

"There's a familiar saying that the road to success is always under construction," Hill said. "Maybe it was a detour that led you to the Lifelong Learning Center. To-



Lifelong Learning Center graduates celebrate after receiving their Maryland State Diplomas during commencement ceremonies Thursday evening.

night, you are on the right road, the road that led you to continue your education. Work hard, take risks and always expect more from yourselves than you think is possible."

One such graduate was Yao Blah Aimee Aka, the GED graduate speaker. Warren said Aka took three buses to get to the Lifelong Learning Center.

"Aimee came to us in the latter part of 2015 and she just came in with a storm. She is a committed and dedicated per-

son," Warren said.

Aka, a native of West Africa, said she began attending the classes at the center after leaving an abusive marriage — first to improve her English skills, and later to obtain her GED. Now she is attending the College of Southern Maryland, she said.

"Thanks to my teachers at the Lifelong Learning Center, for always making themselves available to me," Aka said. "Now I am on my way to achieving my goals."

Heather Julian was the NEDP graduate speaker. Julian said she left school and got married at age 18.

"I knew that earning my high school diploma was not only something I wanted to accomplish, but something I needed to do," Julian said.

Julian is now attending the College of Southern Maryland, where she is pursuing a degree in criminal justice.

"You cannot accomplish something if you never try," Julian



Yao Blah Aimee Aka, the GED graduate speaker, spoke about her experiences earning her Maryland state diploma during the Lifelong Learning Center's 37th annual graduation ceremony Thursday.



Heather Julian, NEDP graduate speaker, spoke of her experiences in earning her Maryland state diploma during the Lifelong Learning Center's 37th annual graduation ceremony Thursday evening.

said. "I encourage everyone to never give up on your dreams, and it's never too late to have a new dream."

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