



The road leading to D'Andre Saunders receiving his Newark High School diploma may have been fraught with some challenges, but it was clear at the informal summer commencement ceremony August 29th that all the effort he and others put into helping him complete his graduation requirements this summer was well worth all the effort.

NHS Principal Tom Roote commended Saunders, saying a summer graduation is special because it “signifies a certain degree of challenge has been overcome _ and evidence of resilience.”

“D’Andre, I have the utmost respect for the work you put into this,” he said, noting as well the vitally important help and encouragement he received along the way from various caring NHS staff members who were equally determined he succeed, including his school counselor Sue Gardner.

“D’Andre came to Newark High School two years ago with a huge heart and determination to make his Grandma proud,” Gardner recalled. “He knew he had to graduate to show his young siblings the right path to take in life. When we first met. he made an agreement with me to graduate and not to give up and he did that.

“He was a student that always had a smile on his face and said ‘Hello’ to me in the hallway,” she continued. “Every teacher that had him would tell me how nice, respectful and caring D’Andre was and how they wished more students had these attributes.”

Gardner recalled how excited she was recently when she learned D’Andre had passed his Regents exams and would graduate.

“I am so proud of him for his determination to finish high school,” she said. “D’Andre, I wish you the best and know that you will continue to be a role model for your brother and sister.”

Before certifying Saunders had met the requirements for graduation, Superintendent Matt Cook congratulated him on his accomplishment and said perseverance is one of the most important virtues anyone could have.

Before the ceremony, Roote cordially welcomed guests including: Saunders family and friends, Krista Lewis, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Ed Gnau, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Board of Education President Russ Harris and BOE members Jim Miranda, Pat Verdine and Brad Steve; NHS Assistant Principal Robyn Ross-Squirrel, Director of Counseling Danielle McGavisk, NHS Counseling Office secretary Patty VerBridge and several other staff members.

Commencement was followed by a reception for Saunders and well-wishers.

Congratulations D’Andre!



Saunders receives his diploma from NHS Principal Tom Roote.



Saunders grandmother, Carol Walcott , left, with Saunders and NHS school counselor Sue Gardner.