



With family and friends nearby in her yard, Jazmine Guzman received her diploma from Newark High School Principal Nick Ganster.

# A Caring Exception

It's not every day that a high school senior "graduates" at her own home.

But thanks to some really caring individuals, that's exactly what Newark High School Class of 2021 member Jazmine Guzman did July 6th after she was released from a brief stay in Strong Memorial Hospital that rendered her unable to attend the outdoor evening commencement ceremonies June 25th at NHS with her peers and Operation Graduation afterward at the Newark Firemen's Field.

After Tracey Kelley, whose daughter Meghan Johnson graduated June 25<sup>th</sup>, read a Facebook posting from Guzman's mother, Heather Boughton, asking members of the Class of 2021 to reach out with cards to Jazmine, who was now home from the hospital and feeling better, but "really bummed" because she could not attend graduation, it really tugged on her heartstrings.

Having organized Operation Graduation for the graduates with a small, but committed group of parents, Kelley felt more than just cards for Guzman were in order.

"I wanted Jazmine to be able to wear her cap and gown and have Nick Ganster present her with her diploma," Kelley recalled.

After getting permission to move forward with the idea from Jazmine's mom, Kelley contacted Superintendent Sue Hasenauer for permission and help.

Because of the unusual circumstances that required Guzman to be hospitalized and miss commencement, Hasenauer gave Kelley the green light to proceed and helped put in motion an informal ceremony for Guzman outside her 6057 Whittings Corners Road home complete with Ganster and herself officiating.

Meanwhile Kelley reached out to a contingent of parents who helped her plan Operation Graduation including \_ Marie and Michael Colacino, Kim Lockwood and Lisa Burns \_ who then helped arrange for a small, but spirited "parade" of vehicles that would follow Ganster and Hasenauer to Guzman's home July 6<sup>th</sup> just before the 7 p.m. ceremony on the lawn outside her home.

Guzman, who knew about the ceremony, but didn't know about the "parade" teared up when she heard the honking horns of the participants that also included

some of her classmates \_ Morgan and Michaela Colacino, Leah Lockwood and Faythe Burns.

Her tears continued throughout the brief, but meaningful ceremony that included her boyfriend Ben Perrone, clad in the cap and gown he wore at the June 25<sup>th</sup> commencement ceremonies at NHS, standing near her as Ganster presented her with her diploma and Hasenauer certified, on behalf of the Newark Board of Education and the State of New York, that she was now a graduate of the Newark Central School District.

And with "*Pomp and Circumstance*" playing on Hasenauer's phone, the Superintendent happily instructed Guzman to move the tassel on her cap from left to the right signifying she had graduated.

Then Guzman addressed her guests saying "*Thank you guys for being here!*"

Later she expressed heartfelt thanks for the caring people who had done something extra special for her.

"*I was so happy,*" she said of the 20 plus individuals that participated in the "parade" and watched nearby along with other members of Guzman's family as she received her diploma.



Guzman poses for a photo after the ceremony with Superintendent Susan Hasenauer.

"*I didn't know everyone was coming. It was so nice and sweet.*"

Watch videos from the event here: <https://www.facebook.com/1805974826/posts/10215932260418478/?d=n>

Thanks to Tracey Kelley and Lisa Burns for providing photos and videos!