

Post Independent

Yampah students ready for the world

Many graduates are parents

By Pete Fowler
Glenwood Springs, CO Colorado
May 24, 2008

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colorado — Yampah Mountain High School student Chelsea Scrivens said on Friday's graduation, "I did it mom, and I love you!" She told advisor Kate McRaith, "You're amazing. You've been like a second mom since my mom died."

Awards and scholarships

- Kara Gibson won an award from the Association of Realtors
- Yanet Alvarez won the Latino Scholarship from Alpine Bank
- Daniel Guzman won a full-ride scholarship to Mesa State College from Myers and Company Architectural Metals
- Clayton Brooks won a \$5,000 scholarship from the Aspen Elks Lodge to attend Fort Lewis College
- Rita Romero received a private donation for two full years at Colorado Mountain College

New Yampa Mountain High School graduate Anna Maria Cruz smiles while her son Isai Pacheco naps during the school's commencement ceremony at Sunlight Mountain on Friday afternoon.
Chad Spangler Post Independent



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Scrivens, and many of the 48 other graduating students, gave a sincere and warm thank you to Sonja Linman along with other advisors. Linman helped found the school and moved on last year after 18 years of working there. Students thoroughly missed her.

Following Yampah's non-traditional and less rigid spirit, students spoke at graduation in no particular order. Some even came back to the microphone a second time with more to say and more thanks for advisors, family and friends. Several students were overcome by emotion and spoke with tears in their eyes and shaky voices. Some recited poems.

The traditional Pomp and Circumstance graduation theme was decidedly not heard.

Students turned their tassels at Sunlight Mountain Resort wearing gowns of all colors, including turquoise and orange. Advisor Susy Ellison joked that Noah Leffler, who wore the orange gown, must have been masquerading as a cone in the parking lot. He's off to the Army June 10.

"These teachers love me so much — every single one of them," said Jacquelyn Henning.

Many students held babies. Principal Leigh McGown said the babies are also graduates of the school's teen parent program.

"Sonja definitely opened my eyes," said Kaityn Welch. "School changed. I didn't hate it. It wasn't an obligation but something I wanted to do."

Hannah Saliman said she came to YMHS halfway through her sophomore year when she was going through a difficult time. She gave a special thanks to Linman.

"She's part of the reason I'm alive today," Saliman said. "As long as Yampah exists I'll come back to Glenwood to visit it."

Handing out diplomas, advisors also had great things to say about each student. Advisor Sally Kilton transformed the first name of each student into an acronym. She said the Diana in Diana Muñoz's name stands for "delightful, intelligent, amusing, no nonsense and awesome."

McRaith said of Kara Gibson, "Kara is the change she wants to see in the world."

Advisor Rick Woolcott told the audience Jacquelyn Henning "is going to make an impact in this world because of her sheer force of will."

Ellison said Alexander King didn't attend graduation because he's in China, which was the reason he came to YMHS. She said he's fluent in Chinese, Spanish and English.

"I think those are the three big languages of commerce so he'll be doing something great," Ellison said.

Advisor Mike Podmore said Stacia Finley is an amazing person who's happy, independent and has a wonderful aura of being relaxed.

McGown said the ceremony was not only a day to recognize the academic achievements of the graduates, but "it's also a day to recognize the unique gifts they've brought to the community."

McRaith said Colton Vitany has created a website called MC's for peace that promotes using music to advance the concept of peace to young people. She said the website has over 300 contacts of musicians.

"Colton's already made huge changes in the world," she said.

The audience drowned out McGown's voice with cheers as she congratulated YMHS's class of 2008. The students hugged their way out of Sunlight's cafeteria for lunch and hanging out on the deck.

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