

Sunday June 24, 2007

## NEWS

OWEGO

### Pride, humor guide salutes to class

By [Doug Schneider](#)  
*Press & Sun-Bulletin*

OWEGO -- They first trooped through an Owego-Apalachin school door shortly after Labor Day 1994, carrying fears and expectations enough to overflow the backpacks slung over 5-year-old shoulders.

On Saturday, their shoulders broadened by almost 13 years, as 195 seniors graduated during Owego-Free Academy's 134th commencement. A parade of speakers, using a sprinkling of pop-culture references, talked of pride, happiness and the occasional student prank.

"We are not a timid class," valedictorian Leah Mendelson reminded members of "Double-Oh-Seven" assembled at Christy J. Valvo Stadium. "If you don't run," she added, "you rust."

The grads collected \$180,158 in scholarship money Saturday, bringing the total of the awards they have received to \$210,451. Also, 152 class members have earned college credits. Seven will enter military service.

"I know you to be smart, creative and well-educated," said Superintendent William Russell, leading his first OFA graduation. Russell honored seven retiring faculty members, and spoke of differences between today's society and America as it was when he graduated in 1968.

Also honored: Charles Elmer Swartwood, who left school for the U.S. Navy in World War II.

RPI-bound salutatorian Adam Majka showed potential as a stand-up comic. Example: "Now is your best opportunity to ask your parents for money."



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Megan Stables moves her tassel after receiving her diploma Saturday during Owego Free Academy's commencement.

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