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## MDIHS Class of 2007 graduates

By Tom Minervino

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Eddie Monat was a little nervous at the start of his commencement address at Mount Desert Island High School on Sunday. His resume is not one of the typical graduation speaker.

A "self-proclaimed underwater superhero," Mr. Monat, a COA graduate, gives scuba diving lessons and owns Diver Ed's Dive-In Theater in Bar Harbor. With his long, curly hair and burly physique, he bears little resemblance to the teachers, politicians, and poets who frequent commencement podiums around this time of year.

"What could I possibly know to tell you guys?" he asked rhetorically at the start of the speech.

And then he inflated his dive suit. Standing behind the podium, the suit slowly blew up, Mr. Monat's arms forced out to his sides and his neck consumed by the ballooning ensemble, as the crowd, packed into Parady Gymnasium and spilling out the back, laughed. When he deflated the suit, he appeared at ease.



Eddie Monat addresses the MDIHS graduates at Sunday's ceremony. TOM MINERVINO PHOTO

"I don't think Stephen King would do that," he joked, taking a jab at the Bangor author who declined MDI's invitation to speak at the ceremony. The crowd laughed and applauded.

Mr. Monat kept his speech brief and humorous. He spoke of his days as an 18 year-old when he was "lobster fishing by day and pumping gas by night," and how he soon realized his passion was fishing and enrolled at COA. "Luckily for me, they were hurtin' for students back then," he said.

He encouraged the 162 graduates before him to follow his lead, to do what they are passionate about.

"Jacques Cousteau was my idol," Mr. Monat said. "Here I am, living my dream, even though I'm a little crazier than Cousteau was."

He stressed the importance of treating others with courtesy and of staying in touch with family, and having good friends.

"Do what you love and surround yourself with love," he said, before walking into the sea of graduates to give a group hug.

Valedictorian Logan Dalton and Salutatorian Kelsey Stratton addressed their classmates together.

"These past four years have gone by quickly and although we spent our years through high school eagerly looking towards this day, now that it has finally arrived, we can only wish that high school could have been a little longer," Stratton said.

Dalton continued, "High school has been a four year journey that each of us shared, and although we have faced our trials and struggles during this uncertain period in our lives, our journey has brought us all together on this day."

They spoke of the shared challenges, experiences, and accomplishments, all linked with classmates, friends, and family through the "amazing and supportive small island community."

The pair gave special thanks to parents and teachers, and wished future happiness for all those seated before them.

"Congratulations to the class of 2007 — we did it," Dalton concluded.

As a senior class gift, the graduates raised \$13,500 to contribute to the upcoming gym renovation project. The funds will cover the difference in costs between plastic and new wooden bleachers. The Board of Trustees voted for the less-expensive plastic bleachers, but the seniors asked for the opportunity to fundraise the difference.

"Replacing them with plastic — as seen in the Ellsworth gymnasium — would not hold up the integrity of the gym that we take so much pride in," said Storr Erickson, the senior class president, garnering applause from the crowd.

Superintendent Rob Liebow, School Committee chair Paul Murphy, principal Sally Leighton, assistant principals Pamela Bush and Matthew Haney, and the dean of curriculum, Elizabeth Lyons, presented the graduates -- segregated by gender and gown color: girls in white on one side, boys in green on the other -- with their diplomas.

After the ceremony, an outdoor reception was held on the back lawn of the school.

For photos from the ceremony and reception, check out the special graduation insert in this week's paper.