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News

Wye River Upper School graduates Class of 2010

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WYE MILLS The 11 graduates arrived onstage to applause from appreciative loved ones and proudly held their newly conferred diplomas in front of them at torso level, so the crowd could see evidence of their accomplishment. Except Mary Coady, who couldn't resist displaying hers over her head.

Later in the lobby of the Todd Performing Arts Center, after she greeted numerous well wishers in a receiving line after the ceremony, the reasons for the Wye River Upper School graduate's trophy-winning type stance became more evident.

Arriving at this day was no small feat, confides Coady's mother, Elizabeth, who corrals a stranger to capture a portrait of her and her daughter.



PHOTO BY M.J. NEUBERGER
Elizabeth Coady embraces her daughter Mary following commencement ceremonies for Wye River Upper School.

A guidance counselor who knew Coady before she came to WRUS said she had been victimized by other students while in public school. "Kids always try to bully those who are different," says Janet Soto.

It helped create deep anger on Coady's part, according to Heidi Wetzel, a former tutor of Coady's who also attended her June 1 graduation.

And it also kept her from achievement, argues Soto. Since taking part in the much smaller program at WRUS, designed to help students like Coady succeed, the young woman has come out of her creative shell, according to the social worker.

A Department of Natural Resources writing contest that the senior won with a heartfelt poem is something she may never have attempted had the bullying been allowed to continue, Soto adds.

"Here they could flourish instead of having to defend themselves."

On the day of commencement, which Coady describes as, "the happiest day of my life," the graduate appears more exhilarated than angry.

At her feet are her diploma, an award she received for a year-long project on water quality in the Bay and a bunches of flowers from fans.

Where anger may have once colored her response to bad experience, Coady now waxes confident about her own future, in which she doesn't appear to see red at all.

"I'm going to be green. Not with envy though," she laughs. Instead, she intends to study environmental science, starting at Chesapeake and transferring to a four-year school.

Her equally exuberant classmates also spoke of bright post-graduation plans. A short ceremony saw them receive their diplomas to thunderous applause.

They included Charles Lane Altfather, Tyler Kristopher Folkman, Timothy James Gooding, Caine Benjamin Knopp, Courtney Marie McNeal, Alexander Jonathan Norken, Marvin Lamar Plater, Chloe Campbell Tong, Christopher Scott Wannewetsch and Jacob Charles Wilkes.

Awards were given out to several students, including Folkman, who garnered the Washington College Book

Award.

Wilkes, Altfather and Tong won presidential awards for academic achievement. Underclassman Rich Coulby received a digital arts award and Gooding and Altfather won the Stuart M. Bounds scholarship award for dual enrollment in Chesapeake College and WRUS.

In his benediction, Rev. Stanley Karloff followed the lead of a ten-second speech given earlier by Tong.

"Go forth with safety and success," he said succinctly.

Leading their loving family and friends from the auditorium triumphantly, it appeared they would.

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