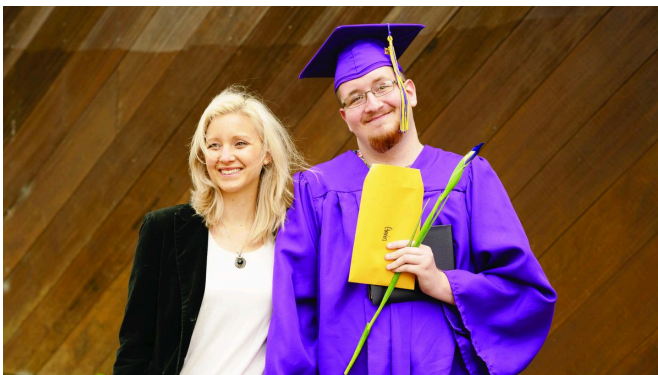


Castle Rock celebrates non-traditional graduation

June 19, 2021



Although it may not have been a typical ceremony, Castle Rock Charter School was still able to celebrate its graduating seniors last Thursday.

Following lingering COVID-19 guidelines, Castle Rock did what many other schools have done of late, and hosted a non-traditional, drive-thru graduation ceremony culminating at the cultural center on Front Street.

Graduates stayed in their cars — most driven by grinning parents — and inched up the parade on Front Street until they arrived at the entrance to the cultural center, where they hopped out, quickly grabbed their hard-earned diploma and a quick photo, and were back in their cars faster than if they had ordered carry-out.

Perhaps an atypical ceremony was fitting for a school as unique as Castle Rock.

Among the graduates was Benjamin Stairs, a student in his 50s who completed some high-school courses before pursuing adult education at Castle Rock, but he had to start from scratch nonetheless, as the schools he attended more than 30 years ago did not have records dating back that far.

Prior to the pandemic, Stairs had a worker help him complete his schoolwork. However, for the past 15 months, he has been completing school work mostly on his own due to COVID-19 restrictions, said Castle Rock teacher Christine Jones.

Jones was Stairs' primary instructor during his time at Castle Rock. She said he told her about his rough upbringing, including being hit by a car and not being expected to live.

"He's gone through a lot in his life," said Jones.

Jones said Stairs was "really excited" about graduating and told her he was "doing it for his dad." Stairs plans to enroll in college courses after taking a year off.

Stairs was able to attend Castle Rock through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. WIOA Title II is a federal initiative designed to promote adult education and literacy.

Castle Rock has hosted many adult education students in the past, and Jones said all five of her adult-ed students graduated this year.

No matter what their pomp or circumstance might be, congratulations to the class of 2021.