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8th-grade grads are moving on up

St. Dominic's pays tribute to scholars' achievements

Jon Wolper
jwolper@lohud.com

BLAUVELT— There were 19 students who participated in the moving-up ceremony at St. Dominic's School Thursday morning, and every one received a personalized send-off.

As the eighth-grade graduates sat in two rows in the school's gym and scores of families and friends took pictures and video, the students' teachers came to the podium to address them one by one.

The teachers spoke of the graduates' various traits and achievements; their musical abilities, their perpetual smiles, how they just recently came out of their shells.

"What the school has done for him has been a great experience," said Steven Chewens Sr. of Monroe,

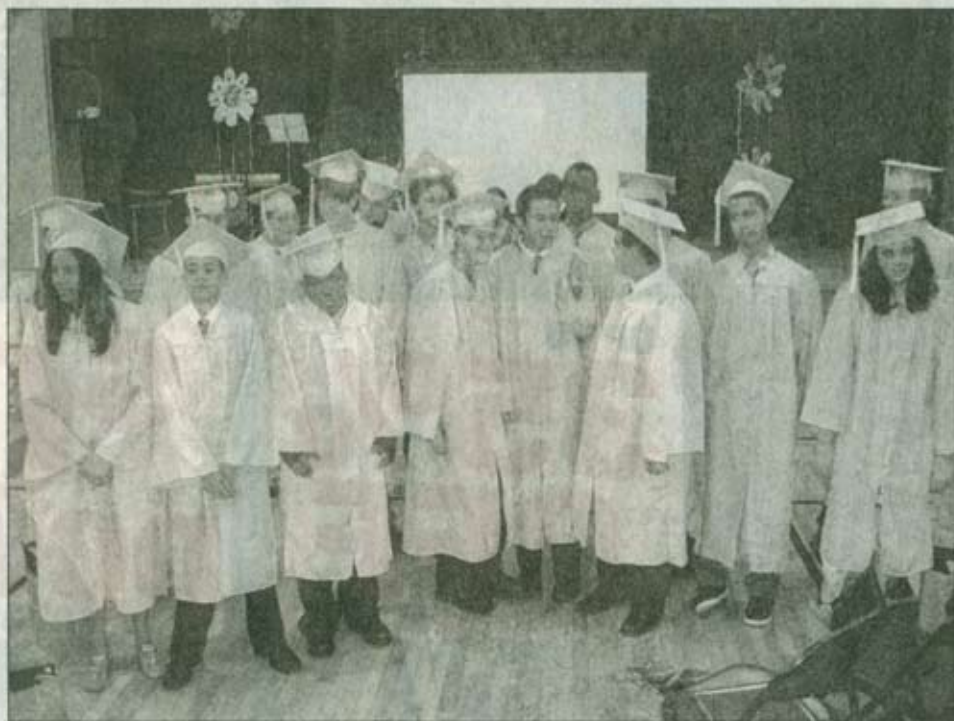
whose son, Steven Jr., was one of the graduates.

"I wish every child could have the experience of this moving up," said his wife, Sue Chewens, who said St. Dominic's School has been "an absolute godsend" for the family.

St. Dominic's School is a New York state-approved, non-public school run by St. Dominic's Home for students with social-emotional needs, neurological impairments and learning disabilities. After graduation, according to principal Susan La Due, students move onto other, often public, schools.

Parents of many of the graduates felt the help the school provided their children — some of whom recently transferred, and some of whom have attended the Blauvelt school for many years — was immeasurable.

"This place brought stability to our lives," said Antone Antonacci, the grandfather of graduate Paul Chindemi. He described himself as "elated"



Jon Wolper/The Journal News

Eighth-grade graduates of St. Dominic's School in Blauvelt participate Thursday in a moving-up ceremony.

during the ceremony. Paul will attend Rockland BOCES in West Nyack next year.

After the individualized presentations and a short performance of a song that featured eight of the graduates on guitars, drums and keyboards, a retrospective video and photo slide show was

played for the graduates and audience.

The photos showed the graduates from young children all the way to outgoing graduates, and some told the camera, while dressed in their gowns, what they would miss about the school.

And although many gave

heartfelt answers, it didn't necessarily mean the graduates were scared of moving to new schools.

Steven Chewens Jr., 14, who will attend Summit School in Upper Nyack, said he was nervous about the move, but not worried.

"It's a good nervous," he said.