

Chapter Eight: Graduations: Enabled Instead of Disabled!



Curtis DelValle, 21, hugs his mother Isabel Abames, after his graduation ceremony at Happy Hearts School. The only student in the 2011 Happy Hearts graduating class, the joy lighting his face settles the question of whether a nonverbal student like Curtis can understand the meaning of graduation. Carl E. Feather took the photo for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.

Parents and graduates of the Happy Hearts School program feel as much joy, pride, and sense of achievement as graduates from public schools, perhaps more because they had to overcome many physical and mental obstacles to complete the curriculum consisting of academic and life skills. Each Happy Hearts student had an Individualized Education Plan or “life plan” to complete.

Instead of grades, their team usually made up of family, friends and teachers, measured their progress and decided when the student was ready to move to the next level. The cut off age for students to stay in the program was 22, but some students graduated earlier. Each graduation featured music, gifts, speeches, and awarding of diplomas, with graduates visibly proud of their accomplishments.

Students had successfully completed the Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft programs since their beginnings in the 1950s, but the first ceremonial commencements, complete with Pomp and Circumstance and processions and recessions down the aisle, became part of the Happy Hearts tradition in the 1980s.

Happy Hearts Commencement, 1981

1981 graduates. Timothy Allen Bates; Sharen Marie Blake; Tamela Jo Hayes; Brian Christopher Lockett; Michael Edward Meredyk; Janice Kay Searcy; Joanna Marie Stawicki; Ray Kelvin Wortman.

Invocation, Father Daniel Kulesa; Guest Speaker, Peter P. Polloni, Deputy Commissioner, ODMR/DD; Student Speaker, Joanna Stawicki.



Graduates of Happy Hearts School in Kingsville preparing for Wednesday's processional (left to right) are Renee Jenner, Lela Holcomb, James Andrego, and Brian Flaughter. Other graduates include Margaret Hannold, Needham Jacobs Jr., Robert Ludwick Jr., Kerry Markin and Melonie Weir. June 2, 1982. Photograph by Vern Fuchs.

Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 1982

June 2, 1982. The 1982 graduates were Renee Jenner; Lela Holcomb; James Andrego; Brian Flaughter; Margaret Hannold; Needham Jacobs Jr; Robert Ludwick Jr; Kerry Markin; and Melonie Weir.

Guest Speaker was Sue Mickle, Superintendent, Ashtabula County Joint Vocational School.

Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 1983.

The 1983 Happy Hearts graduation took place, with five students walking down the aisle. Graduating were Becky Ann Crate; Aaron Michael Crow; Tina Marie Eaton; Daniel Scott Mast; and Timothy John Perkins.

Music teacher Mike DeMarino played the organ for the ceremonies. Mary Ellen Higley, chairwoman of the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities and Mental

Retardation, and James A. Giannell, principal of Happy Hearts conferred certificates. Mike DeMarino closed the program by playing "For All We Know."



June 15, 1985. Apple Orchard Dedicated. Jim and Mary Ellen Blake of Ashtabula dedicate an apple orchard at Happy Hearts School to the memory of their daughter, Sharon Blake. A 1981 graduate of Happy Hearts School and Ashcraft Industries client. Miss Blake died February 1984 at the age of 22. The orchard was made possible through memorial gifts from family and friends. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl E. Feather.

A letter from the files of school Principal James Giannell dated June 1, 1984, announced a Happy Hearts graduation on June 7, 1984 at school. Guest speaker was Reverend William Offutt, minister from the First Baptist Church in Jefferson and chairperson of the Ash/Craft Board.

A letter from the files of school Principal James Giannell dated June 3, 1985, announced that Happy Hearts would hold commencement exercises for graduates on Wednesday June 5, 1985 at 7 p.m. at the school. Guest speaker was Jeanne Bento, Ashtabula County Commissioner and a parent from the program.

1986. There are no records for 1986.

Happy Hearts Commencement, June 3, 1987



Graduating Class. June 3, 1987. Happy Hearts School Superintendent Richard Cozza, Jr. opened the 1987 graduation ceremonies held Tuesday at Happy Heart School. Graduates from left include: Christine Audrey Thomas; Diane Elizabeth Stowe; Christopher Douglas Rayburn; Brian Edward Miller; Michelle Irene Kuscsik; Judith Ann Kohowski; Melissa Ann Feke; and Kimberly Myrene Drozd. Not pictured is Lisa Ann Coffman, who also graduated. Photo by Beth Brody.

1988

There are no records for 1988.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 25, 1989

The 1989 graduates were Carl James Arnold; Glenna Gaye Elkins; Ralph J. Hammond; John James Hurley; Gerald Robert Kangas; Salvatore Sebastian Montagno; Tamara Lawanda Shaw; and Steve Matthew Simko.

The graduates processed into the gymnasium to the tune of Pomp and Circumstance, played by Michael DeMarino. Richard J. Cozza, Jr., Superintendent, introduced the guests and Reverend Ronald Nuzzi of St. John High School gave the invocation. St. Joseph Contemporary Choir sang and Happy Hearts Principal Cynthia M. Phillips presented the class of 1989.

Class speakers were John Hurley and Gerald Kangas, and Ms. Barb Turchetta gave the commencement address. Dr. E. James, Chairman of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, and Principal Phillips conferred the diplomas.

Graduation Speech by John Hurley

Our years at Happy Hearts have been years of learning, doing many different kinds of jobs, preparing foods and working in an office, learning to be more responsible for ourselves. We've learned that we can all be leaders in some way.

Most of all, we've learned how to talk to people and to feel that we are never alone.

We want to thank our families and teachers for all they've taught us. Special thanks to the cooks for all the help they've given us this past year.

Graduation Speech by Gerald Kangas

During our years at Happy Hearts we have grown from youngsters to adults. When we came here many of us couldn't do much for ourselves. Now that we are graduating we can make some decisions on our own. I hope someday we will all be responsible enough to hold jobs in our community.

Special thanks to our teachers at Happy Hearts and to all the people at the County Home and Brown Memorial Hospital for the example and help they've given us. I also want to thank Tony Masters for all that he's taught me this past year.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 30, 1990

1990 graduates were: Curtis Alvin Lee, Sheila Ann Salvato, Dick James West, Jr.

Entertainment for the graduation reception was provided by the Fairport Polkateers. Mike DeMarino was organist for the program. Mr. Richard J. Cozza, Jr., Superintendent welcomed and introduced the guests. Guest Speaker was Mrs. Pat Salvato, Mother of graduate Sheila Salvato. Mrs. Biddiana Kohowski, Chairman of ACBMRDD and Mrs. Mary Ellen Higley, Principal of Happy Hearts School, conferred the diplomas. Mrs. Lois Watson was the vocalist, accompanied by Mike DeMarino. Mrs. Mary Ellen Higley presented the class of 1990.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 24, 1991

1991 graduates were: Walter Kightlinger, Arnold McKeown, Ray Richmond, Samuel Riggs, and Michael Zajac. Michael Zajac was class speaker.

Mike Zajac's speech: Thank you all for coming to our graduation ceremony. I was chosen to speak in behalf of my fellow graduates: Walter Kightlinger, Sam Riggs, Ray Richmond, Arnie McKeown and myself, Mike Zajac. We would like to thank all of the staff at Happy Hearts School for all their help and caring that brought us to this day. We would also like to thank our

families and friends for all their support. We are sad to leave, but excited about what we will be doing in the future. Don't forget us, because we won't ever forget you.

Thomas Gwilt, Chairman of ACBMRDD and Mrs. Mary Ellen Higley, principal of Happy Hearts School, conferred the diplomas. Reverend John Mulqueen, Mother of Sorrows Church, delivered the invocation and Mrs. Mary Ellen Higley presented the class of 1991.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 29, 1992

1992 Graduates: Gary D. Adams; Susan F. Bonds; Randy L. Cutright; James V. McCune; Daniel E. Payne; Jane M. Phipps; and Todd J. Sloan.

Class Speaker: Gary Adams

Thank you for coming to our graduation ceremony. I was chosen to speak in behalf of my fellow graduates: Susan Bonds, Randy Cutright Jim McCune, Dan Payne, Jane Phipps, Todd Sloan and myself, Gary Adams.

We would like to thank the staff at Happy Hearts' School for all their help and caring that brought us to this day. We would also like to thank our families and friends for all their support.

We are sad to leave, but excited about what we will be doing in the future.

Don't forget us, because we won't ever forget you.

Happy Hearts Commencement, 1993

1993 Graduates

Andrew W. Fields

Sandra L. Larko

Mindy L. Martinez

Ivan L. McCumber

Angela M. Milbrandt

Christina A. Pearson

Jennifer A. Richardson

Jeffrey E. Skivolocke

Robert F. Stewart, Jr.

David R. Szalai

Graduation speaker, 1993 - Andrew Fields

Good evening everyone. My name is Andrew Fields. On behalf of my fellow graduating students, Sandy Larko, Mindy Martinez, Ivan McCumber, Angela Milbrandt, Christina Pearson,

Jennifer Richardson, Jeffrey Skivolocke, Robert Stewart, and David Szalai, I welcome you to the 1993 Happy Hearts School graduating ceremony.

Speaking for the entire graduating class, I would like first to thank our families and friends for the care and support given us through the years. Second, we would like to thank the staff here at school to whom we owe so much for helping to make this evening possible.

We feel a little sad knowing that we are leaving our school and many of our friends. But that sadness is softened when we think of the exciting possibilities the future offers us.

Please keep each of us in your thoughts and remember that we are only beginning a different, exciting existence with new and challenging opportunities. We will always have affectionate memories for all of you.

Thank you.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 27, 1994

1994 Graduates

Jennifer Aldrich

Joel Eaton

Randy Fails

Casey Vaughan

Jacob Zelczer

Richard Cozza Jr. welcomed everyone and introduced the guests and Joe Cook extended the community welcome.

Class Speaker Jacob Zelczer thanked everyone for coming to celebrate their graduation with them. He concluded by saying, "Thank you, parents, staff and friends for many great years here at Happy Hearts School. We are sad to leave, but ready to move into our future."

Thomas Gwilt, Chairman of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, and Dr. Mary Ellen Higley, Principal of Happy Hearts School, conferred the Diplomas.

Will Venable sang for the graduation ceremonies accompanied by Joanne Baruffa. The songs they performed included "You'll Never Walk Alone" by Rodgers and Hammerstein, "Without a Song" by Youmans, Rose and Eliscu, and "Look to the Rainbow," by Lane and Harburg.

Congressman Eric D. Fingerhut was guest speaker and Dr. Higley presented the Class of 1994. Don Cosner bestowed the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens gifts.

Everyone sang the "Happy Hearts School Alma Mater," the new graduates marched out in a recessional and the graduates and their friends and families enjoyed a reception in the school cafeteria.

Premix Inc. of North Kingsville awarded certificates of appreciation to Ash/Craft Industries workers Larry Coleman, Lela Holcomb, supervisor Cheryl Marshall, Jean Litchfield, and Sherry Baumgardner. They were recognized for outstanding cleaning services they provided Premix during 1992-1994.

Happy Hearts Commencement, 1995

1995 graduates. Christina Cross, Michael Emory, Rebecca Fortier, Robert Greer; William Griswold; Craig Plats; Jeff Schultz

Organist for program, Michael DeMarino.

Speakers: Mike Emory and Jeff Schultz.

Good Evening,

My name is Jeff Schultz. I wish to welcome all of you to our graduation.

I have been a student at Happy Hearts for 12 years and wish to thank all the teachers and aides for the help I have received here.

I came here with behavior problems and have been able to work through them with help from the staff. I am now ready to go out into the community, find a job and get on with my life. This would not have been possible without this school and people who really care about me.

I will miss this school. This will be an adjustment for me, too, but I believe I have found the way to cope with this and be successful outside.

I have also been able to grow through the Special Olympics Program. I have found friendship, understanding, skills and how to work as a team through them and the sports program they offer. Special Olympics will not stop for me when school does. I will have the fun and activities of Special Olympics for the rest of my life and I am grateful for that. Our coaches are our friends. I wish good luck to my classmates and goodbye to all my friends here at school.

Mike Emory. Good evening and thank you for coming. Many people feel graduation is an ending and a time to be sad. But I would like to have you think of our graduation as a happy beginning. Each of us who is leaving school for the final time tonight has begun a new part of his or her life. One that offers us many exciting opportunities and challenges. There is a time to be grateful.

There is a little sadness at leaving old friends and the school we have known for so long, but much happiness as we begin to make new friends and take on new obligations. This is a time to be happy for everyone.

On behalf of my fellow graduates, I would like to thank the staff at school and especially our families who have loved us and taken care of us for so many years. We will make you proud.

Jean Fields, Chairman of ACBMR/DD and Dr. Mary Ellen Higley, principal of Happy Hearts School conferred the diplomas. Dr. Mary Ellen Higley presented the class of 1995.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 23, 1996

Antonio Butler, Victoria Hippely, Ricarda (Nicie) Reynolds, Rose Marie Perry, and Fred Neville.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 23, 1997

Graduates Mary Almasy and Luis Perez.

Luis Perez 's speech. Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the 1997 Happy Hearts School graduation. This day marks the close of Mary's and my days at this school. It is a day filled with both happiness and sadness. It is sad because today we close the door on part of our lives. It is happy because today we also are opening the door to our future.

Over the years many of you, here today, touched our lives. Your touch did last, not only for that moment in time, but is also felt today. In fact, it is because of you parents, teachers, and assistants that Mary and I are who we are today. For your lifetime touches, Mary and I say thank you and God Bless each and every one of you.

1998 Happy Hearts Commencement

Graduates were Kathryn Fisher; William E. Jenner; Amy Elizabeth Maddox; Horace "Dale" Moore, Jr.; Daniel E. Payne; Carrie Ann Stowe; and Ronald D. Turner, Jr.

Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 1999

The graduating class of 1999 was Diane Barker, Marlon Burton, Jenny Drew, Adam Hughey, Dan Hunt, Trevor Lundgren, Robin Rich, Charlie Smith, and Lewis Thompson. Gene Moroski provided the music.

After the 1999 graduating class processed into the cafeteria, Larry Korland, Acting Superintendent, welcomed and introduced the guests.

Dan Hunt, Class speaker, said:

Good Evening and Welcome to the 1999 Happy Hearts School graduation.

Today is our special day.

It is because of you we have reached this milestone in our lives.

Thank you and God Bless you.

The future belongs to us!

Ron Tate, President of the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board and Ms. Anne Zeitler, Director of Educational Services, conferred the diplomas. John and Kelly Mucci provided the music and Jeanne Bento was the guest speaker. Larry Korland, Acting Superintendent presented the class of 1999.

Happy Hearts Commencement, June 6, 2000



Rob DeCaro (left) congratulates David Baker after receiving his diploma at his Happy Hearts graduation. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Martin S. Lerman.



Kevin Ecklund (left) waits in line as Rob DeCaro gets out as they arrived at Happy Hearts School for graduation.

2000 graduates

David M. Baker

Christopher Robert William DeCaro

Kevin Andrew Ecklund

James H. Michael Taylor

James H. Michael Taylor's Speech

Hello Everyone,

Today is a special day for David Baker, Rob DeCaro, Kevin Ecklund and myself, Michael Taylor. We are happy to see all of you tonight. Thank you.

David M. Baker's Speech

Good Evening:

I am very happy you are here or graduation today. I want to thank all my teachers, teacher assistants, bus drivers, friends, and family for helping me to learn. I will try to be a good worker and make you proud of me. Good luck to my friends, Mike, Rob and Kevin. I will miss you! Thank you.

Christopher Robert William DeCaro's Speech

Good Evening:

I came to Happy Hearts School 21 years ago when I was just a baby. I did not talk. I could not walk. I could not read or write, and I did not have many friends. I did not know many things. I met many people who were very nice to me. I did not know that they were called teachers.

It was very hard work for me to learn, and for my teachers to teach me what I had to know. All of us came to school every day. I found out that learning new things was fun. I will remember all the important things my teachers taught me, and I will use them the rest of my life.

As I get ready to leave Happy Hearts and join the work force at Ash/Craft, I will miss everyone at Happy Hearts School because they believed in me and gave me my wings to fly. They were very happy for me when I became a member of a real family.

I want to thank my little sister Stephanie in heaven, for watching over me and helping me, and my Grandma's and Grandpa's and Aunt Shirley, who are in heaven too, My big Sister Angela, my Brother-In-Law Dean, Aunt Marian, Uncle John, Grandpa Grunau, and my Cousins, and especially my Mom and Dad.

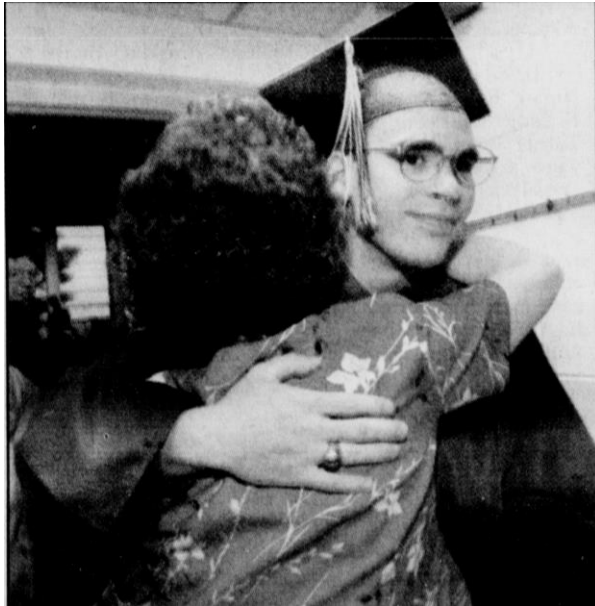
I want to thank Miss Larson at Saints John and Paul and all the new friends that I met there.

I want to thank my Special Olympics family, Bill and Jill Jenner Casey, Pat, Jodi, Molly, and Dick because they helped me in sports.

Most of all I want to thank my Happy hearts family for their patience and guidance; thank you so much. Thank you for the memories. I won't say "goodbye" for now I'll just say, "Till we meet again."

Happy Hearts Commencement, 2001

May 24, 2001



Nickolas Marsh hugs Susan Bland, a teaching assistant at Happy Hearts, after graduation Thursday evening at Happy Hearts. An Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.

2001 graduates were: Tracy Begin, Nick Flanary, Renee Barnard, Beth Harley, Nick Marsh, Matt Mucci, Frank Woodworth, Jeremy Weber, Jessica Baker, Justin Reffner, Sarah Cartner, Ronald Wheeler, Chad Westfall.

Nickolas Marsh's Speech

It is nice to see so many people tonight at Happy Hearts 2001 graduation. I am glad to be graduating this year I have worked very hard to get to this point. I will miss all of the staff here at Happy Hearts and at the Sts. John and Paul satellite. I hope that the friendships that I have made will last throughout my life. I know that the many things I have learned will help me on my way to being independent. As I move through my life, I will work hard and remember all of the things that I have learned. Thank you to all who have helped me. Because of you I can read, do math and now hold a job. My years here have been fun even when there have been some sad times in my life. It has been a great learning experience. Again, thanks.

Matthew John Mucci's Speech

Welcome everybody!

I want to thank everybody at Happy Hearts. I will miss you! I want to thank my mom and dad. I love you. I will miss my friends. It's been fun. Thank you for helping me to get to this special day.

Jeremy Joe Weber's Speech

Thank you to all my teachers and assistants. I will miss my classmates. I will be working at Ash/Craft after graduation. Thanks for the memories!

Jessica Ellen Baker's Speech

Welcome family and friends! I would like to thank all of the staff who have helped me here at Happy Hearts. I will remember all the friends that I have made here. We have shared good times as well as bad. I hope in 20 years that you will all remember me – because I know that I will remember all of you. I would also like to thank my family for helping me through my years at school. Thanks for listening to me for these few moments.

Sarah Lynn Cartner's Speech

Good evening. My name is Sarah Cartner. I want to welcome everyone to the 2001 graduation. I wish to thank my teachers, assistants, grandparents and parents for encouraging me to stay in school. To my friends, I will miss you all. As I get ready to graduate and go out into the real world, I want to say that the training I've received here will help me reach my goal of becoming independent. Thank you.

Elizabeth Ann Harleys Speech

Good evening!

I would like to welcome our families, friends, and all staff who have come to be with us this special night. This is a happy day in my life. I began at Happy Hearts in 1979. Many good teachers have taught me things that I will need to know for life. I believe my years at Sts. John and Paul have prepared me for life ahead. Thanks to all of the people who have helped me over the past 21 years.

I am ready to leave school and go to work. I hope to work in childcare or at Ash/Craft. This may be the end of my school years – but what I have learned has prepared me to work, have friends, and have a better life. Thank you.

Tracy Lee Begin was a member of the graduating class of 2001 and she was looking forward to her graduation day. She passed away on April 12, 2001.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 30, 2002



Jason Winters makes his dream come true by walking into his graduation instead of using his wheelchair Thursday night at Happy Hearts School.

Shelley Terry, staff writer, wrote and photographed a graduation story for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.

Michael Barricklow, Nicole Spangler, Hans Stoltz, and Jason Winters graduated.

Jason Winters makes his dream come true by walking into his graduation instead of using his wheelchair Thursday night at Happy Hearts School.

“This is always a very special evening for our graduates and their families,” said Superintendent Larry Korland. “We commend the students for their perseverance.”

For Jason, just leaving his wheelchair and walking down the aisle with the aid of only a walker fulfilled a dream---not just for him, but his family. His teachers knew this and encouraged him by decorating the walker with blue ribbons.

Michael Barricklow, the first class speaker, took a few seconds at the podium to compose his emotions before reading his prepared speech. With his head bowed and tears falling from his face, he thanked his family and the teachers and the staff at Happy Hearts.

“I will try to make all of you proud of me,” he said. “I will work hard to keep my job. Thanks again to all of you for helping me be who I am.”

Michael saluted the audience who broke out in wild applause.

“It’s real special because we have seen how far they have come in their accomplishments,” said Maureen Hamblin, a classroom assistant, as she reached for a tissue to dab her tear-filled eyes.

Hans Stoltz, radiating confidence, gave an enthusiastic speech recalling happy school days and great meals in the kitchen.

“I loved the Happy Hearts cooks, their apple crisp,” he said. “Thanks for feeding me.”

Hans said he would always remember the many friends he made at the school.

“Thanks to so many of you, I am now ready to live on my own and get my own job,” he said.

When handed the microphone, Jason Winters and Nicole Spangler also expressed gratitude to their teachers and staff for their love and support.

Speaker Janet Neville, a member of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, talked about the challenges of being the mother of a disabled child. She said raising her son, Fred Neville who also graduated from Happy Hearts, taught her many valuable lessons. She said among the most valuable were:

- Never give up.
- Celebrate little victories.
- Appreciate all the things they can do.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 29, 2003

Michael DeMarino provides a little help for Jamie Smock, one of the four students graduating from Happy Hearts in 2003. Ashtabula Star Beacon photograph.



Arthur Stokes, one of the four 2003 Happy Hearts School graduates, meets his mother Debra Stokes shortly after the graduation ceremony. Daniel Kraus took the photo for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.



Melissa A. Meola, Adam Roitz, Jamie D. Smock, and Arthur Stokes graduated in 2003.

The graduation program featured a “Sincere thanks and appreciation to all the staff at Happy Hearts School, both past and present. They have provided an educational atmosphere of love and support and have helped to bring these graduates to this great moment in their life.”

Melissa Meola’s Speech

Good evening and welcome to the class of 2003 graduation. Today is a special day for my classmates and me. When I think back about my school years, my feelings flow like a roller coaster ride. I am both happy and sad. I am both excited and afraid. While I welcome the freedoms of adulthood, I wish I were a carefree ten-year-old again. Even though I’m leaving I’m taking with me good memories. Memories like my crazy friend Lacey, bubbly Wild Bill, dances at Ash/Craft, school proms and nagging teachers. Tonight, I take the first step into my future; a future that means getting a job, independent living and being a good citizen. In closing, I would like to thank everyone who taught me skills that will help me to succeed.

Thank you and God bless all of you!

Jamie Smock’s Speech

Welcome ladies and gentlemen and class of 2003. I have been waiting for this day a long time. I’m happy to be graduating. Throughout my school years I have made many friends. My plan is to work at Ash/Craft and help my brother Troy with landscape work.

My experiences here have been rewarding and I will miss all of you.

Thank you!

Anne M. Zeitler, superintendent, welcome and introduced guests. Robert Taylor, vice president of the MR/DD Board, Michael W. DeMarino Director of Educational Services, Brett Horvath, Assistant Superintendent, Geneva, and Dr. Kathy Dye, Special Education Coordinator from Conneaut, conferred the diplomas. The Edgewood Band, directed by Connie Sommers provided special music by James Curnon titled “Edgewood Festival”.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 27, 2004



Vicky Moyer, a class assistant at Happy Hearts, pushes Desiree Kay Hicks down the aisle following the school's commencement exercises. Warren Dillaway took the photo for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.



Inez Gaumer, president of the ARC of Ashtabula County, addresses the Happy Hearts commencement. Graduates (from left) Desiree Kay Hicks; Bill Ridling; Timothy J. Nieder; Jennifer M. Linn; Douglas Brian Schotz; and James N. Todd wait to receive the diplomas.

The graduates of 2004 **were** Amanda Irene Hayes; Desiree Kay Hicks; Jennifer M. Linn; Timothy J. Nieder; Bill Ridling; Douglas Brian Scholz; and James N. Todd.

After the 2004 graduates processed to the strains of Pomp and Circumstance, Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent welcomed and introduced the guests. Class Speakers were Desiree Kay Hicks, Bill Ridling, and Douglas Brian Scholz.

Desiree Kay Hicks said: Thank you staff for everything you have done for me.

Bill Ridling said:

“I want to thank everyone at Happy Hearts. I will miss you, my teachers, my assistants, all of my friends, and Jesse. This is goodbye.

Doug Scholz said:

Good evening. I am very excited about graduating, and also very sad to be leaving so many friends. I want to thank Jim Kiser for keeping me out of trouble and teaching me about money.

I want to thank Cindy Bucci for helping me with reading and spelling. I have learned a lot being here.

Think of me when I am gone. I will always think of you.

Ron Tate, President of the Mental Retardation Developmental Disabilities Board and Michael W. DeMarino, Director of Educational Services, Brett Horvath, Assistant Superintendent, Geneva, and Ms. Charalene Kimble, Special Ed. Coordinator-Buckeye conferred the diplomas. The Edgewood Highschool Band provided the special Music, and Mrs Inez Gaumer, President of the Arc of Ashtabula County presented the gifts. Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent, introduced the Class of 2004.

Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 2005



Martha Runnion celebrates during Happy Hearts graduation. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.

Graduates of 2005 were Lacey Marie Johnston; Tiffany Rose Mordarski; Michael Alan Phipps; and Martha Lee Runnion.

Class speakers were Marlene Mordarski and Tiffany Mordarski and Laura Hood, speaking on behalf of Martha Runnion.

Lacey Johnston's Speech

Good evening. Thanks everyone. I will miss my friends. Thanks Pat for helping me get a job. I am out of here, and I luv ya!

Tiffany Mordarski's Speech.

Welcome everyone.

I thank my family for loving me and helping me.

Thank you mom and dad for finding Happy Hearts School for me.

Thank you for letting me work with Bobbi in the gym this year.

I liked working with Bobbi and all the students in their gym classes.

I will miss Alice, Vicki, Tracey-everybody here at school. Good-bye.

Ms. Anne Zeitler, Superintendent, presented the Class of 2005 and Ron Tate, President of the MRDD Board. Michael W. DeMarino, Director of Education; Brett Horvath, Assistant Superintendent, Geneva; Ms. Charalene Kimble, Special Ed. Coord., Buckeye; and Joseph F. Donatone, Superintendent, Buckeye conferred the diplomas. Mrs. Inez Gaumer, President of the ARC of Ashtabula County presented the gifts. The Edgewood Band conducted by Mrs. Connie Sommers performed the special music.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 31, 2006

Krista Marie Stonum and Vincent E. Fuller, Jr. celebrated their Happy Hearts School graduation. Photo by Warren Dillaway, Ashtabula Star Beacon



2006 Graduates: Vincent E. Fuller, Jr.; Christina E. Mongell and Krista Marie Stonum.

Students Vincent E. Fuller, Jr and Krista Marie Stonum walk the graduation walk on May 31, 2006. They have walked the same educational path longer than the traditional four years of high school.

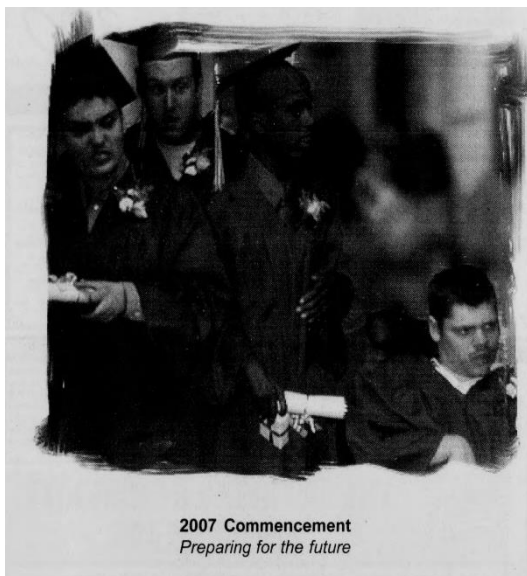
Most students at Happy Hearts have been classmates for longer than the traditional four years of high school. Kenneth J. Schmiesing, director of educational services at Happy Hearts, explained that often students arrive at Happy Hearts when they are very young, some just a few weeks old, and they progress through the academic ranks until they are 21 years old and graduate. These years are the equivalent of an educational life time. After Happy Hearts graduation, many students move on to Ash/Craft Industries to continue the journey that they started with Happy Hearts. Vincent and Krista plan to continue their education at Ash/Craft Industries.

Anne M. Zeitler, Happy Hearts School Superintendent, emphasized the significance of graduation night for Happy Hearts students, and then introduced Kristene DeCaro, parent and Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board member. Kristene narrated her personal journey as the parent of a child with cerebral palsy. She outlined her stark choices in 1976: sign papers making her daughter the ward of the state or take her back home and risk adverse effects on her older daughter and her marriage. The DeCaros chose to bring their daughter home.

Happy Hearts is a special place to Kristene DeCaro and her daughter. She remembered her daughter's first experiences and said that along with growth her daughter experienced learning, friends, dedication, and love.

Kristene DeCaro has worked through the years to help Happy Hearts keep growing and, in her remarks, she acknowledged the entire school roster, including janitors, teachers, aides, and bus drivers. "I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart," she said.

Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 2007



With a joyful backdrop of applause and cheers, four Happy Hearts School 2007 graduates received their diplomas. John T. Henson II, Reynold "Derval" Lindsey; Stephen Joseph McClure, Jr.; and Christopher Salaben collected their diplomas in person. Graduates Ben Johnson and Nicole Danielle Plemel could not attend the ceremony.

Speaking for his class, John T. Henson II said, "My classmates and I have waited a long time for this day. Thank you to all our teachers, friends, and family. We take with us many happy memories."

Guest speaker Stephen McClure Sr. said: "There are all types of families, including your school family, but Happy Hearts is more than a family: It is a world all to its own. This is a place where there is a can-do attitude, a place

ruled by love, compassion and commitment."

As McClure praised the graduates, he said everyone should emulate the kind, compassion of

these young graduates.

Cindy Bucci who has worked for 21 years as an instructor's assistant at Happy Hearts and was very moved by the ceremony. "We love these kids. We get involved in their lives and give them all we can to help them succeed," she said.

The Edgewood High School Band played musical selections including "Pomp and Circumstance," and Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler, said that "It is always a special occasion to have a time of celebration for their accomplishments and happiness as they step out into the future."

She recognized Nadine Moroski sitting in the audience, as being one of the original parents who began Happy Hearts School 51 years ago.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 28, 2008



Aubrey Brogdon waits to walk down the aisle during the 2008 Happy Hearts School graduation on May 29, 2008. An Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.

The smiles of five Happy Hearts School graduates outshone the bright sunset outside as they marched down the aisle in the school gymnasium to receive their diplomas on May 29, 2008. The graduates were Nicole Litnar; Aubrey Brogdon; Ashley Kenyon; Katrina Miller; Dylan Wludyga and John Laird who couldn't attend the ceremony.

Class speaker Nicole Litnar said, "My classmates and I wish to thank our teachers, assistants, bus drivers and therapists. We especially want to thank our family members, including those who are watching this ceremony from their seats in heaven."

Nicole Litnar's father, James, tearfully gave the commencement address as he reminisced with the audience many of the special moments with his daughter over the years.

"Nicole never ceases to amaze me. She appreciates everything; nothing escapes her; she loves everyone; she sees only the good in people — she is the person I wish I could be," he said. "As a

society will we continue to love and protect the weakest among us as the people who have taught my daughter over the years have?"

Superintendent Anne Zeitler recognized many people in the audience, including Nadine Moroski, one of the original parents who started Happy Hearts School more than 50 years ago. Ashtabula County Commissioners Peggy Carlo and Joe Moroski also attended the ceremony.

Proud mother Helen Wludyga, whose son Dylan received his diploma, expressed her gratitude for all the teachers, aides and the people involved with the summer Reach and Teach camp, for all they have done over the years to help her son achieve his potential.

"I never dreamed Dylan would go to public school and experience school with typical kids his own age, but he has exceeded all expectations and we are very proud of him," she said.

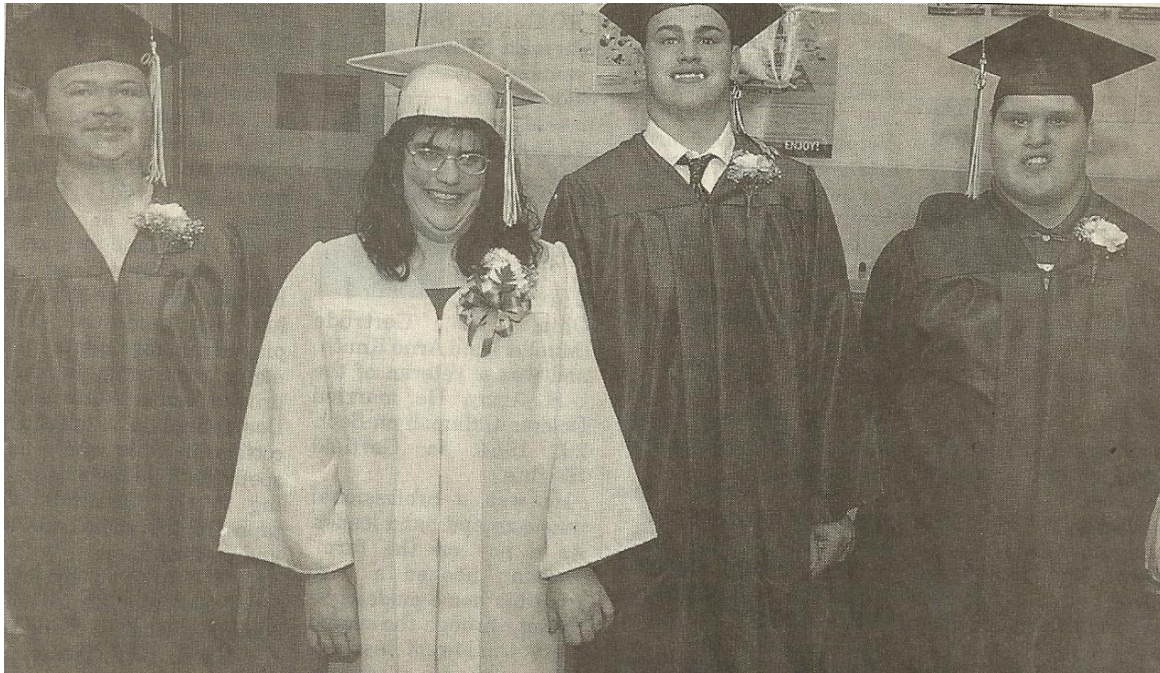
Happy Hearts Commencement, May 27, 2009



The Happy Hearts School 2009 graduates are (back row, left to right) Michael Bailey Jr.; Robert Seaton; Adam Henson; and Nicole Lambert. Front row (left to right) Kyle Lawver and Megan Bailey. Photo by Bill West of the Ashtabula Star Beacon.

Graduates: Robert E. Seaton; Kyle Ray Lawver; Adam Riley Henson; Megan Renee Bailey; Michael Alan Bailey, Jr.; Nicole C. Lambert;

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 26, 2010



Four students, (left to right) Eric Weber, Betty May Marengo, Craig Rankin and Michael Bencar, graduated from Happy Hearts School on May 26, 2010. Bill West of the Ashtabula Star Beacon took the photo.

Five students graduated from Happy Hearts School on Monday May 26, 2010. They are: Eric Weber, Betty May Marengo, Craig Rankin, and Michael Bencar. Robert Prine is also listed as a graduate in the program. Class speakers were Eric M. Weber and Michael Steven Bencar and Mrs. Maureen Rankin was guest speaker.

Eric Weber's speech. Good evening and welcome to the 2010 Happy Hearts School Graduation. My classmates and I thank each of you for being here tonight. We also thank you for your help during our school years.

Mrs. Janet Neville, President of the DD Board; Michael W. DeMarino, Director of Education at Happy Hearts School; Brett Horvath, Assistant Superintendent of Geneva Schools; Mrs. Sylvia Atkinson Principal, Lakeside High School; and Drew Hinkle, Director of Special Services, Conneaut Area City Schools conferred the diplomas. The Edgewood Band, conducted by Mrs. Connie Sommers, provided the music and family, friends, and graduates sang the Happy Hearts School Alma Mater. Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent, presented the Class of 2010. The Arc of Ashtabula County provided the reception and gifts for the graduates.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 26, 2011

Curtis John DeValle graduated from Happy Hearts as the only graduate in his class and without words, but he his classmates, friends, and family provided an admiring audience and he expressed his happiness with a radiant smile and joyful sounds.

His mother Isabel Abames said that her son's big smile told her and everyone else how he felt more subtly than words. "A big smile tells me he's happy," she said.

Curtis enjoyed a graduation ceremony resembling a high school commencement, complete with music from the Edgewood Senior High School Band, an audience of family, peers, teachers and dignitaries, and a reception with a cake from the Ashtabula County chapter of Arc. A processional and recessional of graduates was the only thing missing since Curtis is the Class of 2011, a rare event according to his teacher Michelle Diemer.

Michelle Diemer, his teacher for the past four years, explained that the school decided to move a usually evening event to the school day so his peers could watch him graduate. Michelle Diemer and teacher Jennifer Bunnell spoke at the commencement, commenting on his infectious smile, good sense of humor, and supportive family. Curtis truly has a "happy heart," Michelle said.

Over the past 21 years, Isabel Abames sometimes wondered if Curtis would ever graduate because of his seizures and his limited communication. She said the most challenging part of raising and educating Curtis has been communication "because he does not speak words like everybody else." He became a student at Happy Hearts seven years ago when his family moved to Conneaut from New York.

His mother said that the Happy Hearts staff has done a wonderful job and "they all have shown him so much love and care. I couldn't ask for a better school system for him to attend."

Isabel said she and his brothers and sister would celebrate with Curtis by going out to dinner at Perkins Restaurant and she predicted that Curtis would order a cheeseburger.

Curtis plans to work at Ash/Craft workshop after he has finished celebrating his graduation.

Happy Hearts School Commencement, May 24, 2012

The smiles and congratulations for the five Happy Hearts 2012 graduates were large enough to share with a class of 100 graduates marching down the aisle.

Johnathon Lee Peterson; Herman Eugene Bratton; Phillip John Carlo III; Shari Ann Nagle; and Corrine LeAnne Wellbaum received their diplomas from Michael W. DeMarino, director of education at Happy Hearts and Janet Neville, president of the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board.

Johnathon Peterson's mother, Melissa Townsend felt particularly proud because doctors had predicted that Johnathon would never walk or talk and he graduated from Happy Hearts where

he was class speaker and also from Lakeside High School. She said her sons Johnny and Jimmy who had previously graduated from Edgewood Senior High, were successful because of faith. "If you believe in yourself and in God you can accomplish anything," she said.

The Edgewood High School Band with Connie Sommers as director provided the music and the ARC of Ashtabula County held a reception for the graduates and their families and presented each graduate with a gift.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 30, 2013

Thomas Miles knows that a blessing is a favor or a special gift. He believes that Happy Hearts is a blessing and he articulated his belief at the Happy Hearts School graduation ceremonies on May 30, 2013.

"In my life, and I'm sure the other graduates would also say, we have been blessed by the opportunities we have had at school and through the people that have helped us find those opportunities," he said.

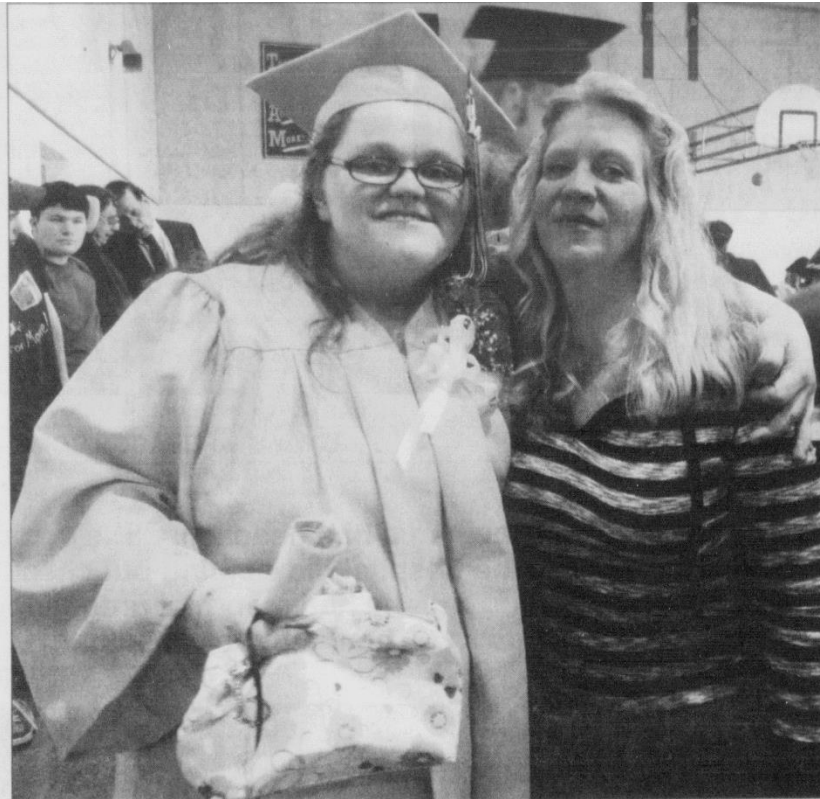
Along with Thomas Miles, Eric Andrew Hagenbaugh; Destiny R. Lagese; Marie R. Lagese; Jamie Paul Lister; Brittany L. Prince; Kodi Allen Renwick; Carly Marie Webber; and Christopher Henry West received their diplomas.

Happy Hearts Teacher James Kaiser is proud of the Class of 2013 and every other graduating class. He said that in his 31 years of teaching at the school every year is a big year and everyone is always so proud of our graduates. He is especially proud of Destiny Lagese. "I had Destiny as my student for four years. It has been a pleasure to see her succeed to grow in the areas of reading, writing, and math," he said.

Principal Patrick Guliano who said his past experience has been in public schools and high schools is spending his first year as the head of Happy Hearts. He commented that "graduations here are so much more emotional. We see these students grow in so many aspects. They show so much persistence."

He said that many people work together to make graduation special, including the Edgewood Senior High School Band who provided music for the ceremonies. "We thank the Edgewood Band, we thank the students, the parents, and the staff for doing their all to make today that much better," Principal Guliano said.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 29, 2014



Happy Hearts graduate Shelby Gerred celebrates with her mother Pam Gerred. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Shelley Terry.

Six Students Graduate in Gymnasium Ceremonies

Nathan K. Brown; Shelby E. Gerred; Mariah Harris; Zachary T. Henson; **Austin H. Judson**; and Kevin J. Kolman graduated from Happy Hearts School in 2014.

Class speaker Kevin Kolman, who is autistic, used a Dr. Seuss poem to express his feelings. “Congratulations! Today is your day. You’re off to Great Places! You’re off and away,” he said. “You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.”

The other graduates were Nathan K. Brown, Shelby E. Gerred, Mariah Harris, Zachary T. Henson and Austin H. Judson. In the commencement address, Kevin’s mother Ellen Kolman reminisced about special times with her son and recounted his accomplishments in his years at Happy Hearts School. “Happy Hearts is the jewel of Ashtabula County,” she said. “We trust them with our precious treasures.”

Ellen Kolman read a poem called “The Orchid,” by an unknown author. “Most children are like dandelions and can grow wherever they may land very easily. They are common and hardy and robust. Other children are like orchids and can only thrive in just the right greenhouse conditions. When they bloom, they are rare, fragile, beautiful, and very special. You are an orchid child, so fortunate to have the right people caring for you. Though you are fragile, you are so very special and it is breath taking to see you bloom.”

She said her son Kevin bloomed at Happy Hearts.

Another proud parent, Jack Henson, watched his son Zachary receive his diploma. He thanked the teachers, aides, and staff and counselors at the summer Reach and Teach Camp, for their efforts over the years to help Zachary reach his potential.

Family and friends and the graduates enjoyed a dessert reception in the school gymnasium after the graduation program.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 28, 2015



(Left to right) Alice Marie Dalrymple, Jalisa Le Anna White, and Andres Walsh are three members of the five-person Happy Hearts graduating class of 2015. Ashtabula Star Beacon Photo by Shelley Terry.

The Graduating Class of 2015 was Marvin D. Byler; Alice M. Dalrymple; Brandon T. Lee; Andres A. Walsh; and Jalisa Le Anna White.

Against a backdrop of pink and white petunias decorating the podium, Superintendent Anne Zeitler presented the five-member 2015 graduating class of Happy Hearts School on May 28, 2015. The male graduates wore dark blue caps and gowns with white carnation boutonnieres and the girls were dressed in light blue caps and gowns with white carnation corsages.

Happy Hearts 2015 graduate Jalisa White and her mother Jean White, shared graduation presentations at the ceremony. While she dabbed away her tears, Jean White remembered that when Jalisa was a baby doctors had told her that they couldn't be certain about Jalisa's mental

capacity. Now her daughter Jalisa not only graduated, but she sang “Wind Beneath My Wings,” by Bette Midler to a standing ovation from the 120 people attending the ceremony in the school gymnasium.

Jean White talked about her Jalisa’s interest in music. "Today, every song she hears, she somehow remembers the words," Jean White said. "She loves to sing."

She said that it was humbling to speak at the Happy Hearts graduation and thanked the teachers, staff, and administrators for helping her daughter grow and reach her goals.

Focusing on the other graduates as well as on her daughter’s achievements.

Jean White characterized Brandon Lee as friendly, welcoming others, and loving sports.

She said that Alice Dalrymple had the gift of endurance and had won medals in Special Olympics. Alice gave back to Happy Hearts by working with preschoolers.

Turning her attention to Marvin Byler, Jean said that he loved basketball and football and church and singing. He gets confidence from his family.

Andres Walsh attracts the girls and his laugh is contagious. He was crowned prom king a few weeks ago,” Jean said, smiling. “He is thankful for his loving family."

Ending her speech, Jean asked the audience to applaud the graduates. The Edgewood High School Band with director Connie Sommer provided the music for the graduation ceremonies and the Arc of Ashtabula County held a cake and punch reception and presented each graduate with a gift.

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 25, 2016

The front cover of the 2016 graduation program says:

Life is like a camera...

Just focus on what’s important and capture the good times..

develop from the negatives and if things don’t work out...

Just take another shot...

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Anne M. Zeitler presented the graduates of 2016 who were Ferdinan Albino, Ervin Miller, and Joseph Nordquest.

Patrick N. Guliano, director of education; Stephanie Canzonetta; Deborah Cardaman; Vicki Moer; Patricia Fields; Inez Gaumer; Jim Kiser; and Modris Krumins comprised the Graduation Committee.

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities members were Mrs. Kristene DeCaro, president; Brett Horvath, vice president; Ronald Cramer, secretary; Don Cosner; Andrew Misiak; and Mrs. Tracy Giddings.

The message on the back of the program said:

Imagine, Believe, Achieve

Ashtabula County Board of DD

1955-2015

"If you can imagine it,

You can achieve it;

If you can dream it,

You can become it."

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 31, 2017



Michael Spaulding, a Happy Hearts School Class of 2017 graduate, shook hands with county commissioners J.P. Ducro IV and Kathryn Whittington after receiving his diploma Wednesday. Ashtabula Star Beacon photograph by Justin Dennis.

Happy Heart 2017 Commencement was held on May 31, 2017. Cody Edwards, Wilmer Miller, Michael Spaulding, and Jacob Valentin were the graduates. Patrick N. Guliano was the guest speaker. The Edgewood High School Band, conducted by Mrs. Connie Sommers provided the music and Inez Gaumer presented the graduates.

Mike Spaulding's, graduate speech.

Good morning, friends, family, and fellow graduates. I want to talk today about the word, "New." When I started high school Mrs. Cardaman said, "High school is a time to try NEW THINGS." We tried new classes, new foods, and new adventures. We went to a musical, a basketball game, and a wrestling match.

High school is a time to make NEW FRIENDS! I have had many of the same friends since elementary school, but I made new friends at high school: Isabella, Felix, Brody, and Alex.

Graduation is an ending, but it is also a NEW BEGINNING. I think the NEW things I remember from high school will help us as adults.

1. TRY NEW THINGS!
2. MAKE NEW FRIENDS!

Thank you!

Michael Spaulding

Happy Hearts Commencement, May 18, 2018



Jacob Jones, a 2018 graduate of Happy Hearts School, processes during graduation ceremonies on Friday afternoon at the school in Kingsville Township.

Nicole Adeline Madden and Happy Hearts School Secretary Stephanie Canzonetta trade high-fives during Happy Hearts School graduation on May 18, 2018. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.



Alexis Brown, 2018 Happy Hearts graduate, is all smiles.

Six Happy Hearts Graduates Take the Next Step In Their Lives

Today is your day and your mountain is awaiting you.” —

Alexis Marie Brown; Kristen Nicole Fink; Jasmine Haley-Marie Hillyer; Jacob Anthony Jones; Nicole Adeline Madden; and Chelsie L. Otto eagerly marched into the Happy Hearts School gymnasium to claim their diplomas at the May 18, 2018 Happy Hearts graduation.

Happy Hearts School Principal Patrick Guliano greeted family and friends attending the ceremony. He thanked staff from the school and Ashcraft Industries for their support, saying students and staff have bonded over the school year. “It is a family affair,” he said. Class Speaker Jacob Jones announced each family so they could stand to honor their graduate.

Carol Mentges, a therapist at Happy Hearts who has worked with disabled children for 50 years, was the graduation speaker. Building her speech around the Dr. Seuss book, “Oh, The Places You’ll Go,” she challenged students to reach for their full potential and encouraged them to explore as many places they could reach in their lives.

Giving a brief history of Happy Hearts, Carol said the school started in a church basement in 1955, and by 1968, the founding parents had acquired state funding and enough students and community support to move into its present building. “This year we will complete 50 years in this building and many graduates have passed through these doors,” she said.

Although the crowd and the graduates were upbeat, an undercurrent of sadness ran beneath the ceremony, because the future of Happy Hearts is uncertain. After voters defeated a November levy, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities announced it would close the school. Board President Andrew Misiak said that negotiations with the County Commissioners and Educational Service to save the school are ongoing and the possibility of Happy Hearts remaining at its Kingsville Township location where the school has been since 1968 is still on the table. Then he focused the conversation back to the students. “It is all about them today. We are excited for them,” he said.

Inez Gaumer, a parent and volunteer at the MR/DD Board and the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens in various capacities for the past 50 years, said that back in 1954, parents of special needs children introduced the idea for a special school for the children. “It is hard to keep from crying. My son went here and he is down at Ashcraft. He has been there 32 years,” she said.

Pre-Schoolers Enjoyed Graduation Too!

June 4, 1986. Big Day. Tom Misch holds the diploma awarded him for his completion of the pre-school program at Happy Hearts School in Kingsville. At left is Russ Grippi, head of the program, and in the background at right, School Superintendent Richard Cozza. Photo by Richard Blood.





School
superstars
stand out



Superstars: Wendy Hakundy, 3, of Ashtabula, makes her butterfly, (above left), during the Early Childhood Superstar event finale Tuesday at Happy Hearts School. Graduates of the program, like Melissa Yopp, marched across the stage to accept the congratulations of Jenny Urch (left) teacher and assistant Lisa Nurkka. "Superstar" Melissa, 3 ½ of Conneaut, will attend school in Conneaut next year. All the early childhood students participated in the event. Jefferson Gazette photo by Amy Fahnestock. June 9, 1988.



Graduation Day. May 23, 1990. Kim Cristo, a preschool program graduate from Happy Hearts School receives her diploma from Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Superintendent Richard J. Cozza during Happy Hearts School graduation. The program graduated 11 students to public school and other Happy Hearts programs. Teacher Jenny Urch smiles with her student. Star Beacon photo by Carl Feather.



Ed Dick (left) and Quinn Novak process on Thursday afternoon during their Happy Hearts Preschool graduation at the school in Kingsville Township, on May 25, 2018. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.

Noela Murton processes down the aisle during her Happy Hearts Pre-School graduation at the school on May 25, 2018. More than 100 people watched eleven preschool graduates marched down the aisle to claim their diplomas.



Special Stories – Melissa Ann Meola



Melissa Meola and Jamie Smock were crowned king and queen of the Happy Hearts Prom on May 2, 2003. Just three weeks later she graduated from Happy Hearts School.

Melissa Meola's Graduation Speech, May 29, 2003

Good evening and welcome to the class of 2003 graduation. Today is a special day for my classmates and me. When I think back about my school years, my feelings flow like a roller coaster ride. I am both happy and sad. I am both excited and afraid. While I welcome the freedoms of adulthood, I wish I were a carefree ten-year-old again. Even though I'm leaving I'm taking with me good memories. Memories like my crazy friend Lacey, bubbly Wild Bill, dances at Ash/Craft, school proms and nagging teachers. Tonight, I take the first step into my future; a future that means getting a job, independent living and being a good citizen. In closing, I would like to thank everyone who taught me skills that will help me to succeed.

Thank you and God bless all of you!

Almost two weeks after Melissa graduated from Happy Hearts, this noticed appeared in the Ashtabula Star Beacon on Monday, June 9, 2003.

Melissa Ann Meola, 21, of Ashtabula died unexpectedly at home on Monday June 9, 2003. Born June 13, 1981, in Geneva, she was the daughter of Timothy and Kathleen Phillips Meola. Miss

Meola was a 2003 graduate of Happy Hearts School where she was named the 2003 Prom Queen. Melissa worked at Guyreino's Deli, and she was recently honored at a graduation party there.

Happy Hearts Graduates: 1981-2018

1981 Graduates

Timothy Allen Bates
Sharen Marie Blake
Tamela Jo Hayes
Brian Christopher Lockett
Michael Edward Meredyk
Janice Kay Searcy
Joanna Marie Stawicki
Ray Kelvin Wortman

1982 Graduates

James Andregio
Brian Flaughter
Margaret Hannold
Lela Holcomb
Needham Jacobs, Jr.
Renee Jenner
Robert Ludwick, Jr.
Kerry Markin
Melonie Weir

1983 Graduates

Becky Ann Crate
Aaron Michael Crow
Tina Marie Eaton
Daniel Scott Mast
Timothy John Perkins

1984

Letter from Principal James Giannell announcing graduation on June 7, 1984. Guest speaker was Reverend William Offutt, Minister from the First Baptist Church in Jefferson and Chairperson of the Ash/Craft Board.*

1985

Letter from Principal James A. Giannell announcing graduation on Wednesday June 5, 1985 at 7 p.m. at the school. Guest speaker was Jeanne Bento, Ashtabula County Commissioner, and a parent in the Happy Hearts Program.*

1986*No documents.

1987

Lisa Ann Coffman
Kimberly Myrene Drozd
Melissa Ann Feke
Judith Ann Kohowski
Michelle Irene Kuscsik
Brian Edward Miller
Christopher Douglas Rayburn
Diane Elizabeth Stowe
Christine Audrey Thomas

1988*
No documents.

1989

Carl James Arnold
Glenna Gaye Elkins
Ralph J. Hammond
John James Hurley
Gerald Robert Kangas
Salvatore Sebastian Montagno
Tamara Lawanda Shaw
Steve Matthew Simko

1990

Curtis Alvin Lee
Sheila Ann Salvato
Dick James West, Jr.

1991

Walter Kightlinger
Arnold McKeown
Ray Richmond
Samuel Riggs
Michael Zajac

1992

Gary Adams
Susan Bonds
Randy Cutright
Jim McCune
Dan Payne
Jane Phipps
Todd Sloan

1993

Andrew Fields
Sandy Larko
Mindy Martinez
Ivan McCumber
Angela Milbrandt
Christian Pearson
Jennifer Richardson
Jeffrey Skivolocke
Robert Stewart, Jr.
David Szalai

1994

Jennifer Aldrich
Joel Eaton
Randy Fails
Casey Vaughan
Jacob Zelczer

1995

Christina Cross
Michael Emory
Rebecca Fortier
Robert Greer
William Griswold
Craig Plats
Jeff Schultz

1996

Antonio Butler
Victoria Hippely
Fred Neville
Rosemarie Perry
Ricarda (Nicie) Reynolds

1997

Mary Almasy
Luis Perez

1998

Kathryn Fisher
William E. Jenner
Amy Elizabeth Maddox
Horace "Dale" Moore, Jr.
Daniel E. Payne
Carrie Ann Stowe
Ronald W. Turner, Jr.

1999

Diane Barker
Marlon Burton
Jenny Drew
Adam Hughey
Dan Hunt
Trevor Lundgren
Robin Rich
Charlie Smith
Lewis Thompson

2000

David M. Baker

Christopher Robert

William DeCaro

Kevin Andrew Ecklund

James H. Michael Taylor

2002

Michael Barricklow

Nicole Spangler

Hans Stoltz

Jason Winters

2003

Melissa A. Meola

Adam Roitz

Jamie D. Smock

Arthur Stokes

2001

Jessica Ellen Baker

Renee Marie Barnard

Tracy Lee Begin. Tracy was a member of the graduating class of 2001 and she was looking forward to her graduation day. She passed away on April 12, 2001.

Sarah Lynn Cartner

Nicholas A. Flanary

Elizabeth Ann Harley

Nicholas Marsh

Matthew John Mucci

Justin M. Reffner

Jeremy Joe Weber

Chad Mitchell

Westfall

2004

Amanda Irene Hayes

Desiree Kay Hicks

Jennifer M. Linn

Timothy J. Nieder

Bill Ridling

Douglas Brian Scholz

James N. Todd

2005

Lacey Marie Johnston
Tiffany Rose Mordarski
Michael Alan Phipps
Martha Lee Runnion

2006

Vincent E. Fuller, Jr.
Christina E. Mongell
Krista Marie Stonum

2007

John T. Henson, II
Ben Johnson- Could not attend
the ceremony
Reynold "Derval" Lindsey
Stephen Joseph McClure, Jr.
Nicole Danielle Plemel-Could
not attend the ceremony
Christopher Salaben

2008

Aubrey Brogdon
Ashley Kenyon
John Laird- Couldn't attend
ceremony
Nicole Litnar
Katrina Miller
Dylan Wludyga

2009

Megan Renee Bailey
Michael Alan Bailey, Jr.
Adam Riley Henson
Kyle Ray Lawver
Nicole C. Lambert
Robert E. Seaton

2010

Michael Bencar
Betty May Mareno
Robert Prine
Craig Rankin
Eric Weber

2011

Curtis John
DeValle

2012

Herman Eugene
Bratton
Phillip John Carlo
III
Shari Ann Nagle
Johnathon Lee
Peterson
Corrine LeAnne
Wellbaum

2013

Eric Andrew Hagenbaugh
Destiny R. Lagese
Marie R. Lagese
Jamie Paul Lister
Thomas Miles
Brittany L. Prince
Kodi Allen Renwick
Carly Marie Webber
Christopher Henry West

2014

Nathan K. Brown
Shelby E. Gerred
Mariah Harris
Zachary T.
Henson
Austin H. Judson
Kevin J. Kolman

2015

Marvin D. Byler
Alice M.
Dalrymple
Brandon T. Lee
Andres A. Walsh
Jalisa Le Anna
White

2016

Ferdinan Albino
Ervin Miller
Joseph Nordquest

2017

Cody Edwards
Wilmer Miller
Michael Spauding
Jacob Balentin

2018

Alexis Marie Brown
Kristen Nicole Fink
Jasmine Haley-Marie
Hillyer
Jacob Anthony Jones
Nicole Adeline Madden
Chelsie L. Otto