



QuEd up for Education

People and programs impacting our QCSD community

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Academy honors its first graduate

By Gary Weckselblatt

Mia Nevells remembers what attending last June's Quakertown Community High School graduation felt like as a senior who wasn't allowed to walk on the big stage.

"It was gut-wrenching," said Mia, who attended the celebration at the PPL Center in Allentown to be there for her friends. Though Mia completed her law enforcement training at the Upper Bucks County Technical School, she was just shy of attaining her high school degree.

When she learned of *The Academy at Quakertown*, the Quakertown Community School District's new educational facility for at-risk 8th to 12th graders, she enrolled.

"I feel like such a weight has been lifted," she said, after receiving her diploma on September 7th from Assistant Superintendent Dr. Lisa Hoffman. "I just needed a little more time."

Indeed, less than one week into the new school year, she is *The Academy's* first graduate. "Mia is proof that perseverance and hard work pays off," Hoffman said. "Everyone is very proud of her for sticking with it."

Jaime Maddon, a Teacher On Special Assignment and *The Academy's* assistant principal, said "It's cool the kids can see the first graduate. All the kids are on a different path. It's great for them to see this so quickly."

Chris Roth, a teacher at *The Academy*, said the school "opened a door for her, and it motivated her."

The district developed the school during the spring and summer as its contract with Ombudsman Educational Services was ending. QCSD officials believed they could produce better results for students. The students' initial lessons are conducted in a cyber format. Anyone needing additional help



Mia Nevells is the first graduate of *The Academy at Quakertown*.

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will be instructed by *Academy staff members*.

The format allows for a specialized, structured educational environment that focuses on individualized behavioral support, consistent expectations and clear boundaries. The staff will work closely with students, families, and related service agencies to address the needs of this student population. Individual and group counseling are provided to each student to address issues that interfere with learning.

Mia's parents Chris and Colleen attended Friday's graduation with several family members. They said they were "proud, excited and relieved" for their daughter, and thanked the district for developing *The Academy*.

"This is such a great idea," Colleen said. "If she had a choice, she would have spent her senior year here. She tried cyber school, but it wasn't for her. Having teachers here makes a big difference."

Mia, who will soon begin training to become a corrections officer, had advice for her *Academy* classmates. "If you need help, don't be afraid to ask for it," she said.

Gary Weckselblatt, director of communications, writes about the people and the programs that impact the Quakertown Community School District. He can be reached at 215-529-2028 or gweckselblatt@qcsd.org.

Mia Nevells celebrates achievement with family.

