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**Graduation**

The Commencement completed a series of busy days at Iredell County's community college. Earlier in the week, 246 GED students sat beneath the same tent for their graduation exercises. Forty-two student nurses were pinned and graduated, as well.

Dr. Douglas Eason, president of MCC, congratulated the students on their successful run at the school but reminded them of an event at the Olympic Games in ancient Greece. Runners in that event, he said, each carried a burning torch. But the winner wasn't necessarily who finished first, but who finished first "with the torch still lit."

"Your run at Mitchell Community College was successful," he said, "but be sure to keep your torch lit."

After his brief remarks, Dr. Eason presented the President's Award to honor graduate and the school's most outstanding student Karla Causey.

Following that, Chris Ahearn, vice-president of public relations for Lowe's Corporation and former television news reporter, delivered the graduation address by saying it was a speaker's duty to "be witty, be brief and be seated."

While brief, she managed eight points in her address she felt could help students take advantage of opportunities soon to come their way.

First, she advised them to keep learning and to treat coming challenges as learning opportunities. Earlier in her career, she was spokesperson for Food Lion during the Food Lion versus ABC lawsuit. During that trying period, Ahearn, who barely stood tall enough to be seen over the speaker's lectern, said she had to go head to head with such news luminaries as Ted Koppel and Diane Sawyer.

She was under great pressure, she said, but "learned to handle situations that were tense every moment with no room for error." Such challenges, she offered, are opportunities for growth.

She next advised students to "seize every opportunity to put into practice what you learn." During her time at Food Lion, she said, she grew very comfortable, but "seized an opportunity" to move to Lowe's

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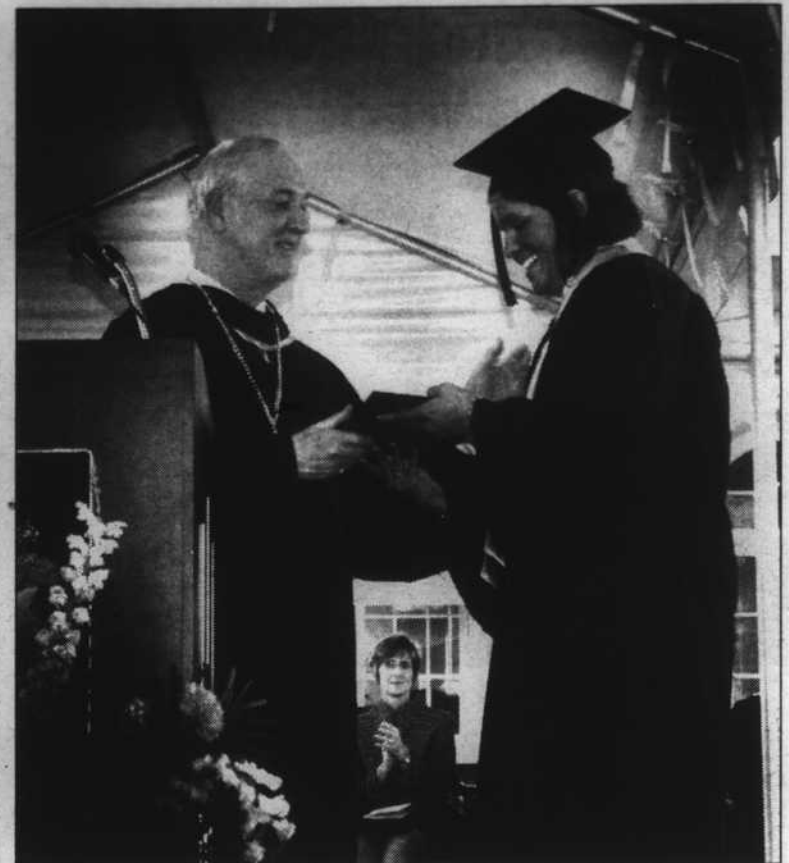


JAIRO RAFAEL MERCADO, SR., gets a shot of his newly graduated son, Jairo Mercado, Jr., on the steps of Huskins Library at Mitchell Community College.



Marshals Katrina Jones and Cheryl Remeta lead the MCC class of 2008 past the community college's instructors and staff just prior to Commencement.

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KARLA CAUSEY COLLECTS HER PRESIDENT'S AWARD from Mitchell Community College President Dr. Douglas O. Eason. Causey was judged the class of 2008's most outstanding student.



MITCHELL GRADUATES WAIT EXPECTANTLY to have their degrees conferred upon them by MCC President Dr. Douglas O. Eason.



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