

ACCOMPLISHMENT CELEBRATED



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

After receiving a flower, graduate Laurel Staub received a hug from her mom, Candice Staub, after Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College's 189th Commencement on Saturday on the SMWC campus.

The Woods confers nearly 300 degrees

TRIBUNE-STAR STAFF REPORT

In a pair of ceremonies Saturday, 283 new graduates became alumni during Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College's 189th commencement.

"Today, we are celebrating the accomplishments of our students over two ceremonies with nearly 85 graduates present at each one and many watching from home through the live stream," said college President Dottie L. King.

"Regardless of where you are or where your family members are, we are excited to recognize your graduation and completion of your journey at The Woods," King said.

Speakers were chosen by faculty and staff from nominations by students. Sydney McCammon, a psychology major, addressed her peers during the morning ceremony for campus undergraduates.

"SMWC has truly become a second home for me," McCammon said, according to a news release from The Woods.

Turn to **DEGREES, A3**



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

Graduate Brooke Andrus accepts her diploma from President Dottie King during Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College's 189th Commencement on Saturday on the SMWC campus.

Degrees

Continued from A1

"I know changes and transition periods can be times of uncertainty, and I want us all to know that it's OK if we're unsure where our path will lead us. So, let's take our time. Let's not be too hard on ourselves for making mistakes; it's inevitable and how we learn. You are hard-working and capable, and this degree is evidence of that."



MCCAMMON

Luis Botello, who completed his degree in exercise science, shared that although he was skeptical about coming to The Woods his freshman year, he realized he made the right choice.

"Thinking about my experience at The Woods is bittersweet," Botello said. "I'm glad that we're finally graduating. Although it's sad that it's coming to an end, I wouldn't change it for anything."

In the afternoon ceremony, online and graduate students heard from Rebecca Weimer, who earned a master's in art therapy.

"Most of us began this journey in the midst of COVID," Weimer said. "The fear of loss, the unknown and the future state of the world sat heavy on our shoulders as we attempted to navigate academia, endless Zoom meetings and internships in a continually shifting world."

"While our beginnings were rocky and confusing, we have arrived today as living proof of resilience and the power of hope," Weimer said.

Jamie Shotts, a master's in nursing grad, said SMWC truly made an impact on her.

"I cannot say enough about SMWC and the (Master of Science in Nursing) program," said Shotts. "The instructors were absolutely some of the best nursing instructors I've ever had."

"They were so supportive and encouraging. I certainly wouldn't be where I am today without them," Shotts said. "I will forever give back for everything they've given me."

Award winners were recognized during the ceremonies.



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

Graduate Ethan Stattner receives a fist bump after he accepted his diploma during Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College's 189th Commencement on Saturday at SMWC.



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

Graduate Emma Leturgez prepares to walk on stage and accept her diploma during Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College's 189th Commencement on Saturday on the SMWC campus.

Maura Secrest received the Undergraduate Alumni Leadership and Service Award.

Tammy Walker, class of 2016, received the Graduate Alumni Leadership and Service Award.

The Maud Helm Rockwell Medal for Academic Excellence is given to a graduate of the campus-based program and a graduate of the Woods Online program with the highest academic grade point average.

Rockwell Medals were awarded to Alexandra Joy Bayer, Patricia Lee



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

Graduate Alexandra Bayer shares a laugh with President Dottie King as she accepts her medal during Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College's 189th Commencement on Saturday at SMWC.

Henney and Sydney McCammon in the campus ceremony and to April Lynn Hale in the Woods Online ceremony.

A baccalaureate liturgy ceremony was held in The Church of Immaculate Conception on campus between ceremonies.