



STAFF PHOTOS BY MITCH ABRAHAM

CareerForces' Adult Basic Education recognized 28 people during a graduation ceremony late Thursday afternoon. The event was hosted by ABE manager Shari Brunos.

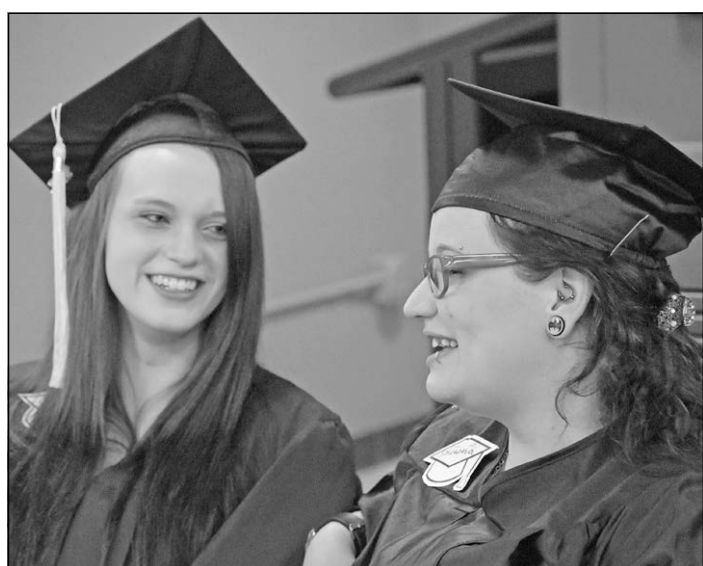
# Never too late to graduate

**R**idgewater College's auditorium was filled to the brim Thursday when 28 students were honored with certificates of achievement during CareerForce Centers' Adult Basic Education graduation ceremony.

Those who graduated were: Antonio Montes de Oca, Jane Hong Ji, Terje Makarova, Norma Rodriguez, Marlies Sotres-Anderson, Michele Steuck, Kanjana Tarr, Sarah Anderson, Abraham Guillen Arandia, Ashley Arnson, Eddie Becker, Jack Becker, Tyler Callahan, Miriam Castillo, Abigail Fortman, Talea Glesener, Hannah Goodman, Scott Goodman, Brianna Hanke, Amelia Hesselgrave, Jessica Holtz, Dustin Kortz, Shawna Martinson, Christopher Olson-Lopez, Oscar Salazar III, Chloe Stevens, Guadalupe Vargas Santoyo and Catera Williams.

There were three separate areas of study from which students graduated: citizenship, child development transitions grant and general education development. Students shared stories of achievement and celebrated with cake and punch during a reception afterwards.

— Mitch Abraham



Graduates Jessica Holtz and Shawna Martinson share candid moment before heading into Ridgewater auditorium for the ABE graduation.



Sibling graduates Hannah and Scott Goodman pose with ABE manager Shari Brunos, center. After completing graduation, Scott plans on re-enlisting in the Army National Guard and Hannah, who's currently taking EMT classes, plans on starting Ridgewater College's paramedics program this fall.

## TRAVIS

► continued from B1

science and destruction, and give back to those faced with terrible circumstances," he said. "As a volunteer and career firefighter, I was always hungry to be better. To say that I fought fire with a chip on my shoulder was a gross understatement."

Evans was working as a

full-time captain when the economy tanked in 2008. Last hired, he was the first let go.

His wife, Kathryn, was from Hutchinson. They both agreed that if they ever moved it would be to Minnesota. During that discussion, Travis reached out to Hutchinson Fire Chief Brad Emans. He was told to give him a call when he moved to town.

The couple, with their daughter, Evelyn, made the

move in 2012. In an interesting twist, the family bought the home that had belonged to Emans' mother.

### FIREFIGHTING AND WELDING

Once settled, Travis joined the local fire department and decided to go back to school. He started taking welding classes at Ridgewater College.

"Welding would be a hard step to take for people crippled by fear," he said. "I didn't want to live in fear."

He found he liked welding. "I learned as much as I could about oxygen and acetylene, their uses and the by-products of combustion," he said. "I learned the explosion on our farm was due to a malfunction with the regulator on the torch."

In another interesting twist, the student became the teacher when Travis was asked to be a welding instructor at Ridgewater.

"I was a little surprised when I was asked," he said.

It made sense when Travis thought about it, because he had the skill set from his welding classes and the teaching ability from the continuing education classes he had taught and taken as a firefighter in Colorado.

Looking back over the past 20 years, it's clear why "Culmination" is a fitting title for his sculpture.

"This piece is my coping with a tragedy by gaining knowledge in structural firefighting, EMS and metalworking," he said. "This piece is a reminder of loved ones lost, 343 dedicated firefighters who died on Sept. 11, and to those in the unique position of rebuilding by gaining knowledge that was once unknown."



STAFF PHOTO BY KAY JOHNSON

John Travis used this helmet — the one he wore as a firefighter for the Evans Fire Department in Colorado — as the model for his sculpture, "Culmination."

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