

Students say goodbye

Marietta College graduates 358 at 171st commencement

Hundreds of men and women filed into Marietta College's Dyson-Baudo Recreation Center as college students Saturday afternoon, and by the time they left they were college graduates.

There were 358 graduate and undergraduate degrees handed out on Saturday, and one honorary degree was bestowed on U.S. Congressman John Lewis, D-Georgia, at the school's 171st commencement ceremony.

As the keynote speaker, Lewis, a leader during the civil rights movement, urged the graduates to stand up and do their part to help bring about change.

"As a young child, I tasted the bitter fruits of racism, and I didn't like it. I saw those signs that said 'white men,' 'colored men,' 'white women,' 'colored women,' 'white waiting,' 'colored waiting,'" he said. "I used to ask my parents, my grandparents, and great-grandparents, 'Why segregation? Why racial discrimination?' And they would say, 'That's the way it is. Don't get in trouble. Don't get in the way.'"

But on Saturday afternoon, Lewis urged Marietta College graduates who saw injustice and inequality to get in the way.

"We must not give up, we must not give in, we must not give out. During the last half of this century, we have come a great distance. We witnessed a non-violent revolution under the rule of law, a revolution of values, a revolution of ideas. But we still have a distance to go," he said.

Some graduates knew exactly what they were going to do in their professional lives.

"I'm going to be a pharmaceutical sales representative," said Rosa Hanks, who graduated with a bachelor of arts in organizational communication. "I start with Pfizer Pharmaceuticals on June 30."

Others weren't so sure.



PATRICK COOLEY The Marietta Times
Nicholas Aylward, runner-up of the Jewett Oration prize, addresses the audience at the 171st commencement ceremonies Saturday.

“I’ll be getting a job,” said Brian Jenks, who graduated with a bachelor of arts in advertising and public relations, “while I look for a better job (in my field).”

Jenks said he found Lewis’ speech very interesting.

“He had some really good stories about his life and the civil rights movement,” he said.

Hanks said she was glad to hear Lewis urge graduates to get involved.

“He basically said, ‘Don’t waste your time, go get it,’” she said. “I really liked that he told everyone to go out and make a difference.”

The graduates also heard speeches from two of their own.

Among the students who submitted speeches for the Jewett Oration, to determine graduation speakers, Nicholas Aylward, who graduated with a bachelor of arts in history and theater, was the runner-up. Aylward told students about when he first realized that Marietta College was his new home.

“I felt a comfort level that I had only ever felt in my hometown,” he said. “It was a reassurance that this was where I was supposed to be.”

After the speech, Aylward said he was intimidated about having to give a speech in front of more than 1,000 people, but when he took the podium he didn’t feel nervous.

“It was quite a comfort knowing they were there to hear me speak and they were cheering me on,” he said.

Hanks won the competition with a speech called “4 years, 1,460 hours, 39,064 days.” She called on her fellow graduates to work together to solve the country’s problems.

“With every major and minor represented in those seats, we have the power to make incredible change,” she said. “To shape the world, to make it a better place, and to leave our mark on our communities, careers, friends, family and, dare I say it, but, humanity.”

She said afterwards that she wanted to write a speech which would focus on what would happen after college.

“I really don’t like it when people write (graduation) speeches that only focus on the four years we were in college,” she said. “The point of college was to prepare you for the rest of your life. I wanted to remind them of the potential we have as a group.”