

# The Pueblo Chieftain

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## Pueblo City Schools honors 120 top seniors

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***Nearly all of the graduates honored had earned 4.0 grade averages; eight also earned associate degrees from PCC.***

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By JOHN NORTON  
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

In 1982, Jeff Coyne stood before his fellow South High School graduates as class valedictorian.

On Wednesday afternoon, with 17 years of academic and professional experience behind him, Coyne addressed the top achievers among this year's crop of Pueblo City Schools graduates, telling them that the values he learned from the National Honor Society have carried through to his personal life and career.

Coyne was the keynote speaker at the school district's awards ceremony for about 120 students who were honored for academic achievement, leadership, character and service.

The ceremony was held at Colorado State University-Pueblo.

After graduating from South, Coyne went on to earn an engineering degree from Colorado State University-Fort Collins where he graduated seventh in his class. He works at Lockheed Martin where he's the lead engineer developing a solar power unit for NASA's Juno mission to Jupiter. Coyne also has been program manager for the 1998 to 2001 Mars Surveyor

Program, including Mars Orbiters and Mars Landers, and while at Ball Aerospace, he was the principal engineer for the Mars Exploration Rover Program.

While all that sounds important, Coyne told the group of seniors, "I'm still the guy that takes out the trash at home. It's not all rocket science."

As rewarding as his job is whenever a spacecraft lifts off and sends back images from Mars, Coyne said, "most of the excitement and enjoyment that I get from my job is knowing what I'm working toward."

He recalled his own school days telling the students, "I'm sure you weren't too excited about every math test you took or every English essay you wrote."

But all those steps count for something, he said, likening it to climbing a mountain, "when you look back from the top you realize that you really accomplished something."

The four pillars of the National Honor Society - scholarship, leadership, service and character - sounded "corny," when he was in school, Coyne said. But by the time he reached his senior year, and as time has passed, he said he's seen the value of all of them.

"These tenets have served me well."

Coyne said it was obvious the group before him believes scholarship was important. "Graduating at the top of your class is a significant accomplishment," he said.

But leadership skills would be essential, too, he went on. "You need to get your ideas across. Be a role model."

Coyne also said that people too often think that service is the opposite of leadership, but "service is the willingness to work to benefit to those who need. The more the leader you are, the more people you will serve."

Finally, he said, character meant respecting the opinions of others and learning from mistakes.

"I made plenty of mistakes. The ones that resulted in smoke and fire were pretty obvious to those around me but the others weren't. I could have moved on and forgotten them."

Learning even from the mistakes no one notices builds character, Coyne said.

Nearly all of the graduates honored had earned 4.0 grade averages and eight, Melanie Johnson, Robert La Crue, Kenneth Medina, Deborah Perron and Bryndee Peterson of Centennial High School, Marquis Medina and Rikki Moore of Central and Brandon O'Grady of East, also have earned associate degrees from Pueblo Community College.

Others honored were:

Nicole Abney, Nathaniel Adams, Emily Aldag, Antonio Amaya, Alexis Anderson, Lauren Archuletta, Emily Asbury, Shaina Beaudin, Lauren Bell, Melissa Beltran, Drew Brice, Ryan Brooks, Danielle Brude, Mathieu Cerankowski, Nicholas Chantala, Christopher Corey, Talia Cozzetta, Tomaso DeNiro,

Morgan Devendorf, Austin Dillow, Joseph Dingman, Lauren Dorsey-Spitz, Danielle Dudley, Peter Early, Dustin Ethredge, Estevan Fernandez, Gregory Fillis, Raquel Fuentes, Heather Fulton, Stefan Garcia, Margaret Gardner, Regina Garduno, Katie Gillespie, Gary Gomez, Zachary Gonzales, William Gonzales, Alexander Gradishar, Breann Hazelton, David Henson, Sarah Housman, Bradley Humphries, Blake Icabone, Benjamin Jimenez, Maureen Jones, Kalli-Anne Kemling, Sara Kettelkamp, Kendie Kihn, Brandon King, Brandon Kliesen, Alex Laydon, Drew Legan, Joseph Linck, Joshua Luna, Kelsea Marinucci, Cassandra Martinez, Joshua Mathews, Geneva Mattoon, Zolanye McCulley, Ashley McNamara, Kenneth Medina, Erica Medna, Brandon Montoya, David Moore, Lindsay Moran, Sarah Mutz, Rebecca Naccarato, Lindsey Neldner, Dannielle Oliva, Brenden Ortiz, Sendi Peregrino, Jacquelyn Perez, Tyler Prentiss, Theodore Puls, Cody Purcell, Morgan Purkey, Gina Ragulsky, Michaela Rastrelli, Erica Reinhardt, Laurisa Rodrigues, Meral Sarper, Clinton Sefcovic, Jasmine Shepherd, Mary Shinn, Jarred Simmer, Tera Sisson, Jennifer Smith, Michael Stachler, April Stevenson, Mary Thiebaut, Tayler Thomas, Amber Vesterby, Bethany Walker and Jordan Ward. [norton@chieftain.com](mailto:norton@chieftain.com)