



Regan Communications Group

# PEABODY WEEKLY NEWS

May 31, 2012  
Circulation: 7,173

2

WEEKLY NEWS - 978-532-5880

MAY 31, 2012

## Peabody Learning Academy graduated 22 last week

By Jeff Shmase

PEABODY — The Peabody Learning Academy held its second annual commencement exercise last Friday at the Northshore Mall, with 22 students receiving their Peabody Veterans Memorial High diplomas.

The ceremony featured an array of speakers, who congratulated the pupils for making the most of their “second chance.” The academy is an alternative program designed for students who were at risk of dropping out while attending Peabody High.

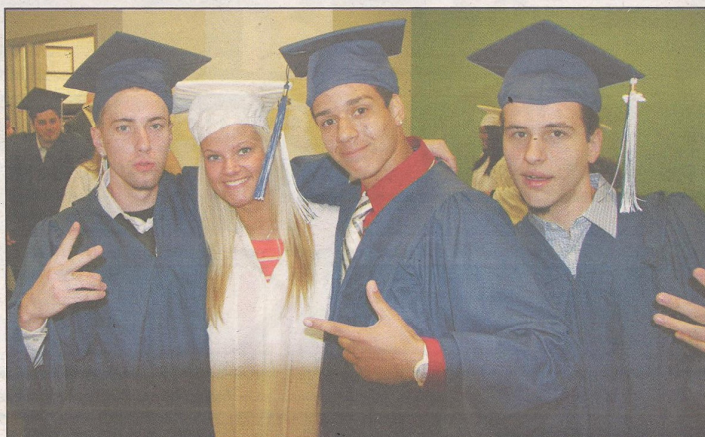
Interim Superintendent of Schools Herbert Levine told the students they made a “series of good choices” in getting to this position. Levine also relayed a story about himself and the choice he made

urge you to continue to make the right decisions; that is what life is all about.”

Former Mayor Michael Bonfanti, current Mayor Ted Bettencourt, retiring high school principal Ed Sapienza, Brian Jenkins from Simon (the mall’s owner) and Seith Bedard, the academy’s director, also spoke at the ceremony. Bonfanti told the students they were given a great gift (the opportunity for another chance to get an education) but it was up to them to take advantage of that opportunity, something the students did by courage, determination and hard work.

Sapienza told the graduates they “opened the door for their future and others to follow.”

Several students were given scholarships. Joanna Bolanos, Christopher Rodriguez and Lyndsay Konovalchick



Photos by Jeff Shmase

Peabody Learning Academy graduates, from left, Richie Kirby, Jamis Piskorowski, Ronald Aponte and Xhonatan Jaho, ham it up prior to commencement exercises at the Northshore Mall last Friday.

while he was a college student in the 1960s.

“I dropped out of college for about six months so I could work full-time selling women’s shoes and make \$80 a week, which was good back then,” he said. “I met a lot of girls and I had a lot of fun but it made me think about what I wanted to do in my life and that was teach. I

received Simon Youth Foundation scholarships of up to \$6,000 over two years to continue their education. Michael Almeida, Ronald Aponte, Jessica D’Amico, Xhonatan Jaho and Jamie Piskorowski each received \$2,000 scholarships.

Bolanos was named the academy’s Student of the Year for her dedication and work ethic.

Last year, of the eight graduates from the academy, seven continued their education in college and remain there.

The Simon Youth Foundation, which partnered with the Peabody Public Schools to launch the academy, has 23 such schools in 13 states, serving 1,300 students.



Peabody Learning Academy director Seith Bedard spoke at graduation.

**FasTrack**  
AUTOMOTIVE INC.

**\$10 OIL CHANGE**  
(SYNTHETIC BLEND)  
FOR ALL FIRST TIME CUSTOMERS  
— Limit One Per Household —  
**CHECK ENGINE LIGHT ON?**  
WE WILL CHECK IT FOR FREE.

**978.977.0707**  
147 Summit Street • Building 10  
Peabody, MA 01960 (Behind Capones)





Lyndsay Konovalchick, left, and Joanna Bolanos each received scholarships to continue their education. Bolanos was also named student of the year.

## Meet the PLA Class of 2012 graduates

PEABODY - The following graduated from the Peabody Learning Academy last Friday: Michael Almedia, Ronald Aponte, Alexa Battersby, Christina Bid, Joanna Bolanos, Jes-

sica D'Amico, Christopher Downey, Natasia Ferreira, Rebecca Holmes, Xhonatan Jaho, Richard Kirby, Lyndsay Konovalchick, Peter Means, Jedra Oth, Jamie Pisko-

rowski, Christopher Rodriguez, Michael Sabogal, Alexandria Sharkey, Cameron Smith, Jenna Starratt, Louis Tsioumas, Joseph Zezze.