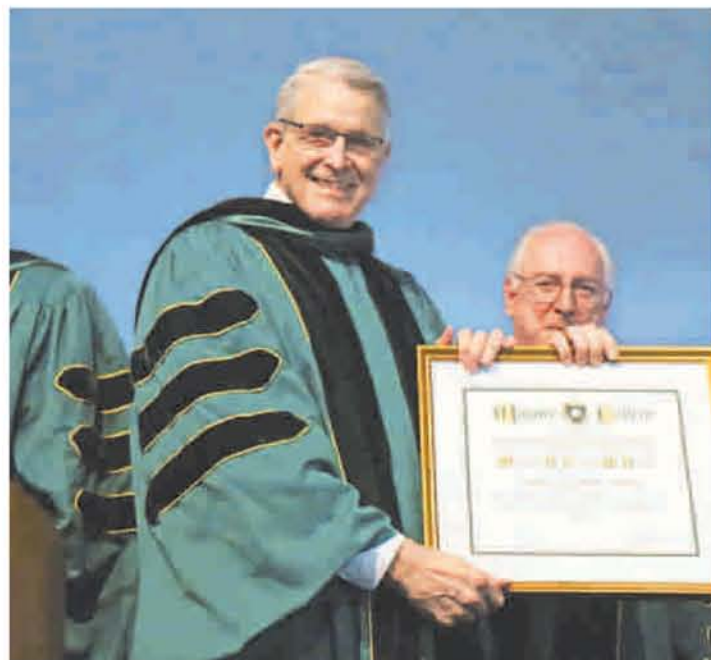




Guest speaker Richard Negrin addresses the graduates. Jan Somma-Hammel/Staten Island Advance photos



Dr. Warren R. Procci receives a doctor of humane letters as Dr. Richard Guarasci, president of Wagner College, looks on.



A graduate expresses her delight at receiving her awards.



Dillon Quinn speaks on behalf of the Class of 2017.



Graduates applaud during the 128th Wagner College commencement ceremony, held outdoors on the Grymes Hill campus on Friday.



Graduate Christiane Malledje of New Dorp is all smiles.

GRYMES HILL

A day to celebrate

Approximately 674 students were awarded degrees Friday at the Wagner College commencement on the Grymes Hill campus. Former NFL player, attorney and politician Richard Negrin was the guest speaker. Negrin received an honorary doctorate degree, as did Dr. Warren Procci, Class of 1968, who is chairman of Wagner's board of trustees. For a story on the day's events and a list of graduates, see Page A 7.



Dr. Richard Guarasci, president of Wagner College, welcomes the graduates, family members and friends.



The Gatto family poses for a photo with their graduate, Anna. From left are Joe, Katherine, Anna and Joanne.

A graduate proudly claims her degree.



Wagner College graduates told 'adversity will make you stronger'

Diane C. Lore
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Former NFL player, attorney and politician Richard Negrin told Wagner College graduates Friday their future will be tested by adversity, but adversity will make them stronger.

Negrin, a Wagner graduate, Class of 1988, who played briefly with the New York Jets (1989), and served as deputy mayor of Philadelphia, delivered the keynote address to the Class of 2017 during the 128th Wagner commencement on the Grymes Hill campus. He said success will depend on how graduates can handle their "A.Q. — adversity quotient — your ability to overcome adversity and keep moving forward."

Adversity will make them stronger, he told graduates. He related his own experience, when he was 13, of witnessing his father, a Cuban exile, being gunned down by assassins. He said his years at Wagner helped him push through the tragedy and ultimately made him stronger. "You are ready to thrive, ready to make your mark," he told graduates. "Make your days count."

Negrin received an honorary doctorate degree, along with Dr. Warren Procci, Class of 1968, who is chairman of Wagner's board of trustees.

Procci is himself the son of a Wagner alumnus and native Islander, Waddie Procci, Class of 1936, whose parents immigrated from Italy. He said his liberal arts



A group of friends poses for a photo after the ceremony. Jan Somma-Hammel/Staten Island Advance photos

education at Wagner prepared him to understand and contextualize everything else he learned in medical school and professional training.

"Nearly 50 years after my Wagner days, my liberal arts education remains the single most valuable educational experience I have had," Procci said.

A total of 446 bachelor's degrees and 215 master's degrees were awarded. The college also awarded its first doctorate degrees; 11 earned doctor of nursing practice degrees. Two

post-master's certificates were also awarded. Graduates and their families sat outdoors for the ceremony, under a tent on Sutter Oval, shielded from the sun on one of the hottest days of the year so far.

Wagner President Richard Guarasci cited several graduates who will be pursuing higher-education degrees in myriad fields, from law to medicine. The Class of 2017, he said, is a class of "independent thinkers and compassionate citizens, who would use their education

to better themselves, establish excellence in their chosen professions, become people of social conscience and advance the democratic and inclusive mission of this nation."

Student speakers were Aspen Trautz, winner of the Dr. Donald A. Spiro Award for outstanding academic and co-curricular achievements, and Dillon Quinn and Gabryel Oloaupo, who were the winners of a competition for student commencement speaker. Oloaupo is a native of Auckland, New Zealand, who

will join the country's Olympic water polo team. "To all of my peers, as we venture out into the world, I challenge you to continue having conversations and confronting ideas that contradict your own," she said.

Quinn, of Chaska, Minn., served as Student Government president. "My experiences at Wagner shaped me, empowered me, and allowed me to transform my voice and use it to be an advocate for change," he said. "The goals you set for yourself and what path you

take to reach your goals is entirely your own. But I know that Wagner has provided each and every one of us with the tools, knowledge, and understanding to go out there, forge our own path, and do great things," said Trautz, a biology major from Landsdale, Pa.

Graduates were elated about obtaining their degrees. Lauren Eisenbeis, of Stonington, Conn., who received a bachelor of science degree, showed off her mortarboard that proclaimed "Done with this B.S." — but said she'll be back in 10 days to begin studies for her master's degree. She wants to become a physician's assistant.

Sean Walrath of Fair Haven, Conn., was happy to receive his bachelor's degree in business administration and marketing. He said he plans eventually to get a master's degree in business administration, but said he plans to begin job hunting first.

Twins Mark and Chris Rucci of Sunnyside both earned bachelor's degrees. Mark earned a bachelor of science degree in arts administration, with a concentration in Italian, while Chris earned a bachelor of arts degree in theater. Both were eager to show off their mortarboards. Chris, a fan of "Guardians of the Galaxy" had "I am Groot" on his cap. His brother had a quote in Italian from astronomer Galileo: "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself."

The 2017 Wagner College graduates

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POST-MASTER'S CERTIFICATE

Lefeth Bailey-Williams, Jennifer Macchiarola.