



College graduates celebrate triumphs

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By Courtney Vaughn, Hi-Desert Star



JOSHUA TREE — Copper Mountain College's class of 2012 graduation was a testament to each student's journey, but it also spoke volumes about the college's own progress.

During a commencement ceremony at the Bell Center Friday evening, May 25, honors graduate speaker Yucheng Geng recalled his path to achievement.

Like the college, Geng had to overcome numerous challenges as he embarked on his goal.

Born and raised in China, Geng taught himself English shortly before he began taking college courses at CMC in 2008.

"My family cried when I left China. Not because I was leaving, but rather, I think, they were afraid I couldn't survive in America. I couldn't drive. I couldn't speak English. I had no work experience," Geng recalled.

"I found Copper Mountain College, an oasis in the desert, a place that gave me hope and goals to perceive."

Keynote speaker Owen Gillick reflected on the college's evolution, recalling the days when college classes were located at a defunct parochial school in Twentynine Palms.

"We also offered classes at the high school and the various churches. It was spread throughout the Basin," Gillick recalled. He talked about the progression of the school and help of community donors and generous benefactors like the Bell family, which helped transform the infant college from the mid-1970s into what it is today.

"There was not that (educational) option then and there is now because of this place," Gillick said.

That night, students and their loved ones gathered in a state-of-the-art gym to celebrate the achievements of community college graduates.

The path to recognition wasn't easy for CMC, just as it wasn't easy for Geng or his fellow students.

Over the course of a few years, Geng went from a non-communicating foreigner with no experience to a distinguished scholar who will further his studies at University of California at Irvine, in hopes of becoming an international businessman.