



## Copper Mountain College graduates celebrate personal progress

By Courtney Vaughn, Hi-Desert Star  
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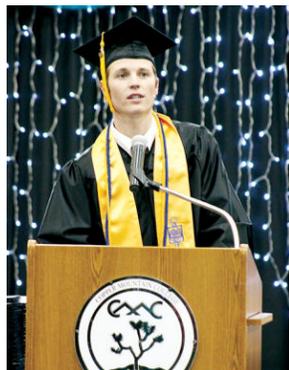
Graduates at Copper Mountain College move the tassels on their mortarboards Friday evening as the final step in the graduation ceremony. CMC graduated 165 students this year.

### Ready for the world

JOSHUA TREE — Copper Mountain College has come a long way since its rudimentary beginnings, and so have its students.

The community college graduated 165 students Friday, 18 of whom received two degrees and one of whom graduated with three degrees.

Honors graduate speaker Chris Morin characterized the graduation as “a day of triumph and scholarship,” asking his fellow graduates, “What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word growth?”



Morin told his fellow graduates about his shortcomings in high school and his decision to find the best in himself when he enrolled at CMC.

He went from being a self-described “high school slacker” to eventually working and attending college full time while still maintaining a high grade-point average.

“When I hear growth, I think of this very college. Copper Mountain College has helped me to exceed in ways I never thought I would,” Morin said. He thanked his instructors. “They helped me become more thoughtful and open-minded. They helped me become more critical and intellectual.”

He acknowledged that he and his fellow graduates did not start their collegiate path in a sprawling city or an Ivy League college, but said they should be grateful for the atmosphere CMC provided them.

“We will see how lucky we were to start our journey at a small community college” Morin said of he and his peers’ future reflections.

Congressman and former CMC instructor Paul Cook served as the evening’s keynote speaker.

Cook reminisced about the college’s early beginnings from classes taught out of a Catholic church to the faith, ingenuity and the hard work that led to the construction of the Basin’s first college.

He said as an instructor, he would always ask his students, “Why are you here? What do you want out of this?”

“It would always break down into, ‘I wanted a better job, or a better life for myself and my family’ and this college, this place here, was the opportunity to do that,” Cook said.

He called teaching at CMC “one of the best jobs I ever had.”

“I taught at UCR. I taught at Cal State and the best students I ever taught were right here.”

As the ceremony ended and the doors of the Bell Center flooded with families and students in caps and gowns, it was clear to some that Friday signaled the first day of a new life.

“I’ve learned so much since I first came here,” Brenda Alvarez Romero said as she was greeted with camera flashes and balloons. “I’m gonna miss everyone, but I’m ready for the world.”

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