Hinchey among those hailed at SUNY New Paltz graduation

Nearly 2,800 get undergrad and advanced degrees

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NEW PALTZ — Two members of one Hudson Valley family are confident that their trip across the rain-slicked podium Sunday at SUNY New Paltz was a key to helping them stay afloat financially.

Leo Vogel was among those in the sea of umbrellas that sprouted over the more than 1,400 graduates at the college's commencement.

His dad, David, was there, too — also to graduate.

"It was nice to share it with my father," said Leo Vogel, 23-year-old marketing major from Red Hook.

While the younger Vogel lived on campus, his 50-year-old father commuted from his home in Port Ewen.

After working 25 years as a civil engineer and state-licensed land surveyor, the senior Vogel said, he found himself out of work.

So he decided to go back to school to get his bachelor of science degree in geology.

"The company that I was with closed up in 2010 because of the collapse of the economy," said David Vogel. "In order for me to get a (new) job, employers wanted a bachelors degree."

David said SUNY New Paltz was willing to accept his credits from SUNY Delhi, a two-year college where he earned an associates degree in 1983. He believes his newly earned degree will give him the clout he needs to land a new job.

College president Donald Christian took note of the Vogels' achievements from the podium at Sunday's commencement, and pointed out that graduating from New Paltz is part of the family's legacy.
"David's mother attended SUNY New Paltz in the 1920s when it was a 'normal' school (for teacher training)," Christian said.

This year, 2,059 undergraduate and 721 graduate degrees were conferred. Participants at Sunday's event included more than 1,400 undergraduates and more than 260 graduate candidates.

Former congressman and New Paltz alumnus Maurice Hinchey received an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

Hinchey had earned a bachelor's degree in English from New Paltz in 1968 and a master's degree in...
Christian described Hinchey as "our most distinguished graduate."

Hinchey's former Hudson Valley representative, Lori Dubord, Class of '94, served as the commencement speaker.

She praised Hinchey's lifetime of accomplishments, particularly his efforts to protect the environment.

Dubord explained that her experiences at SUNY New Paltz "sent me down the road of public service." She was still a student when she began working as an intern in the congressman's office 19 years ago.

As for the graduates, their rain-soaked caps and gowns provided marginal protection from the elements.

"It's just like I imagined my college graduation — (in) pouring rain!" said Michael Stabile, 26, as he sat waiting for his turn to get his diploma.

On the job front, Stabile, an education major from Rockland County, said the job forecast is considerably brighter for him — he begins his new job Monday.

"I'll be teaching Earth Science to eighth-graders at the Harvey School in Katonah," Stabile said. "I'm filling in for someone who's on maternity leave. I'm excited and nervous."

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