

Class of **2018**

HOPE

ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY



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May 24, 2018



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Alpha Learning Academy

Director: Celina Apodaca

Ruby Renee Baca
Timothy Charles Santistevan*

Awaken Academy

Directors: Dominic Trujillo
and Joey Trujillo

Alyssa Lynn Brown
Esperanza Maria Delgado
Olivia Mariah Duran
Ian William Hans
Rose Marie Henderson
Scott Allen Kuenning
Juanita Rose Martinez
Karina Venegas*
Conner Davis Wilson

Brighton Leadership Academy

Directors: Jaime and Kim Vega

Santiana Rae Cordova
Raegan Leanne Heitman
Marlaina Larae Montoya
Adrian Nava-Morales
Abiram Nunez Hernandez
Jorge Luis Nunez Hernandez
Analica Carmen Olivas
Yulissa Yareli Prieto
Ashley Mariah Pruitt*
Jovan David Ramos

Brighton Leadership Academy (cont.)

Laura Isabel Retana Martinez
Ernesto Ivan Rodarte
Hunter Owen Salter*
Ana Catherine Sanchez
Ivan Jafet Santibanez
Jalen Alexander Silva
Joshua David Silva
Ana Candy Torres Morano*
Jason Abel Valdez Jr.

Front Range Academy

Director: Lynne Dare

Dyani Anderson
Danielle Thresa Biggs
Marcus Anthony Carabajal
Jaci Marie Collins
Marie Lynn Estrada
Kyle Eliseo Gonzales
Kaily Anne Goodhouse
Tayler Brienne Heath
Alora April Lara
Alexis Marie Middleton
Katelyn Rose Moffett
Bailee Danielle Plessinger
Alasadir Micah Rodriguez
Jose Luis Rodriguez Ortiz
Alexander Robert Schermerhorn
Ashlyn Brooke Staudinger
Jayden Jhet Szakmary
Kathrynn Ellyse Ulrich
Everett Tyler Wersen

I AM Academy South

Director: Anthony Watson

Alejandro Pedro Castorena
Marcos Irineo Jose Ruvalcaba

Maranatha Learning Center

Director: Victoria Aguilar

Cheyenne Danae Burton
Alexis Hernandez Sanchez
Luis Javier Manriquez Jaquez
Michael James Mathis
Natalie Rodriguez Hernandez
Susana Ivette Silva*
Devin Earl Warner

Mountain View Academy

Director: Amanda Cancino

Milagro Milly Hernandez*
Addison Marie La'Misa Payne*
Marselino Daniel Vazquez

New Heights Academy

Director: Nancy Valdez

Jessica Castaneda

New Hope Academy

Director: Denise Duran

Le' Andra Delores Augustin*
Alexander Raziel Gonzalez
Gabriel Moises Gonzalez*
Felicity Kae Hernandez
Kyle Matthew Hernandez*
Ethan Michael Hollis
Abel Landeros Jr.
Damaris Carolina Lechuga*
Gabrielle Raina Montoya
Maria Guadalupe Pena*
William Boston Speier
Angela America Velasquez Molina

Park Hill Academy

Director: Amener Williams

Higdon Donell Armstrong V
Saquaya Monique Johnson*

Power Academy

Directors: Zach Macaluso
and America Delgado

Erick Jose Alvarado Marquez
Jasmine Lizzette Alvarez
Josue Anaya Vargas*
Jairo Baltazar Medina
Yaneth Monserrath Camacho*
Victoria Espino
Andres Estrada Jr.
Giovanna Lares

Power Academy (cont.)

Adilene Amparo Mireles
Juan Angel Mireles
Lesly Andrea Nunez Carrasco
Anahi Ortega Lara
Eunice Yazmin Raigoza*
Zulema Reyes Galvan
Francisco Salazar
Alondra Valenzuela
Rodolfo Vallejo Rodeo

Titan Academy

Director: Amy West

Lynzey Lee Conner
Desaray Leann Hutto
Piper Mercedes Powell*
Mackenzie Hope Rohrbacher*
Mason Arthur Tuttle

Universal Learning Center

Director: Jeffrey Estrada

Scott Alexander Nazar Draudt
Skylar Marie Murdock

*Congratulations to Valedictorian
Gabriel Gonzalez of New Hope
Academy and Salutatorian
Milagro Hernandez of
Mountain View Academy!*

*Graduates with Academic Honors**

RUBY BACA



Alpha Learning Academy

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ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY

Staying in school and earning her diploma was important to Ruby Baca.

“It was something my father always expected of me. I want to make him proud,” said Ruby.

In August, Ruby’s father passed away. Her mother died when she was in 5th grade. Ruby was months away from graduating, but was now without a place to stay in Pueblo to finish out school.

“My husband and I invited her to live with us,” said Ms. Celina Apodaca, Director of Alpha Learning Academy. “She had grown up with us, and we had gone through a lot of milestones together. We are quite proud of her.”

Ruby is thankful for the direction the Apodacas have provided to her life.

“Ms. Apodaca has been there for me the most. It is easy to open up and talk with her. And she is very understanding,” said Ruby.

Graduating is a milestone in Ruby’s family. She is the youngest of five and none of her older siblings have earned their diplomas. One of her sisters dropped out of school after her father passed away.

“My sister wanted me to drop out when she did,” said Ruby. “It is not easy to earn your diploma. But I loved Alpha and the people there.”

At one point during her high school years, Ruby transferred to another school. She immediately saw that her learning style did not fit this environment.

“They broke down the steps more at Alpha. That helped me understand,” said Ruby.

After graduation, Ruby is planning to become an EMT and has her sights on attending a medical institute in Colorado Springs where her family lives in the fall. She is currently applying for scholarships and works at McDonald’s in Pueblo. Ruby will continue at a McDonald’s location in Colorado Springs while she earns her college degree.

“I am a people person and like to help others,” said Ruby. “At Alpha, I could be myself and I made many friends.”

Ruby participated in many activities at Alpha Learning Academy. She was in several clubs, including Art Club. She also served as Teacher’s Aide in the middle school class and helped at the front desk and with answering phones. This last school year she gave a motivational talk to the high schoolers on the importance of staying in school.

“She is caring, unselfish and has unconditional love, even if many times she does not receive it in return,” said Ms. Apodaca.

Other hobbies of Ruby’s include drawing, hiking and being outdoors.

KARINA VENEGAS



Awaken Academy

Class of 2018

HOPE
ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY

Your legacy. This is a guiding principle in Karina Venegas' life. Two years ago she began volunteering at Lutheran Medical Center in Wheat Ridge. This is because she was being drawn to a career in the medical field.

"I have gained a new perspective and insight into the profession," said Karina about her volunteer experience. "Through nursing I feel I can help the most people and make the biggest difference in the world."

In the fall, Karina will be attending Red Rocks Community College. She also plans to continue volunteering at Lutheran Medical Center. Later, Karina has her sights set on attending the University of Colorado to earn her nursing degree. Karina will be the first in her family to graduate from high school and go to college.

"Growing up I didn't think I would reach this point," said Karina about earning her diploma. "Education had failed many times in my family. This is a big accomplishment. I am proving the statistics wrong – that people like me are getting pregnant at a young age and will never earn a diploma."

Karina appreciates the community at HOPE's Awaken Academy for sticking with her throughout her years at the Learning Center.

"They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself," said Karina, who started at Awaken in 7th grade. "I appreciate they take kids in who don't fit in a regular school environment."

Middle school at her former school had been a struggle for Karina. One her largest challenges was bullying. At HOPE's Awaken Academy, she found a more drama-free environment and appreciated the smaller atmosphere.

"They push you to graduate," said Karina. "When you put your mind to it, you can do it."

While at Awaken Academy, Karina has been involved in their poms team, as well as played volleyball. She also attended Prom and competed in the ACE Business Challenge, earning top honors during her senior year competition.

"Karina's academic success is a testimony to her adventurous and indomitable spirit," said Ms. Ann Coney, the HOPE Building Resource Teacher at Awaken Academy. "She has razor sharp focus and determination. Yet, for all her strength and tenacity, she is always friendly and down-to-earth. I know that she'll accomplish wonderful things in the future!"

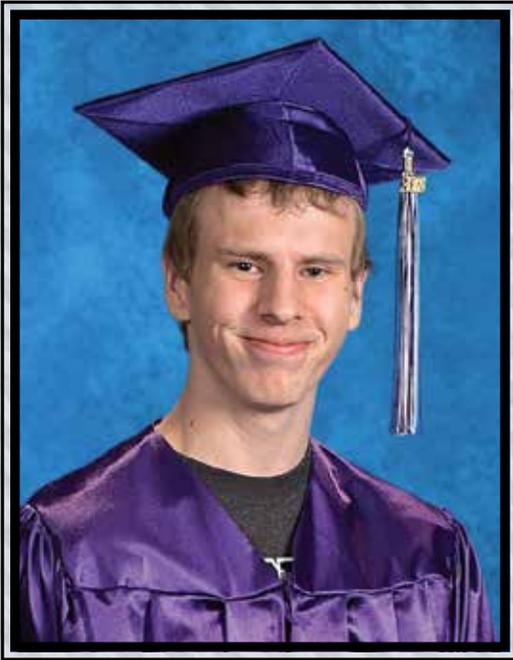
Ms. Ann Coney is someone who Karina admires. Even though she has been battling cancer for several years, Karina says Ms. Coney is one of the most positive and strong people she has ever met.

"I owe a lot to her in helping me decide on my career," said Karina. "She has definitely left an impact on me I won't soon forget."

Karina's younger sister, Vanessa, also is a student at Awaken Academy. She is thankful for her family, especially her parents, who are originally from Mexico.

"They grew their family here as they wanted a better life for all of us. Getting my education is helping my parents fulfill their vision for us," said Karina.

ALEXANDER "ALEX" SCHERMERHORN



Front Range Academy

Class of 2018

HOPE
ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY

There is not one aspect of HOPE's Front Range Academy that Alexander "Alex" Schermerhorn would change.

"I like everything. I have never had a bad day here," said Alex.

Alex says the staff at Front Range Academy have made all the difference for him. Prior to coming to Front Range Academy, Alex said he had never had a connection with a teacher.

"They are awesome. Scott is the coolest teacher I have ever had and is great at teaching math. Lynne (Front Range Academy Director) is like a grandmother to me," said Alex. "When you like the teacher, you learn better."

In his home life, Alex serves as a caretaker. His mother is raising him and his two younger siblings, who are 11 and 12 years old, on her own. Alex's mother works nights at a local King Soopers.

"The curriculum here helps me out as I have many personal responsibilities when I leave," said Alex.

Alex is planning to follow in his mother's footsteps and attend college at Metropolitan State University of Denver where he plans to study History.

"My mother is a hard worker. It is important for her to provide a roof over our heads and food on our table," said Alex.

Outside of school, Alex enjoys basketball. He says it is his favorite activity to do during P.E. at school. Basketball is something Alex pours his soul into everyday on the court. In his future, he would like to play more basketball. He enjoys the NBA and follows the Denver Nuggets. Alex has also played in a couple of basketball recreation leagues. Additionally, Alex enjoys building things and figuring out how they work. He is thinking he may look into being an electrician too in the future. He has made his education a priority in his life as he understands the importance.

"Keep going and never give up. Without an education, it will be hard to find a job," said Alex.

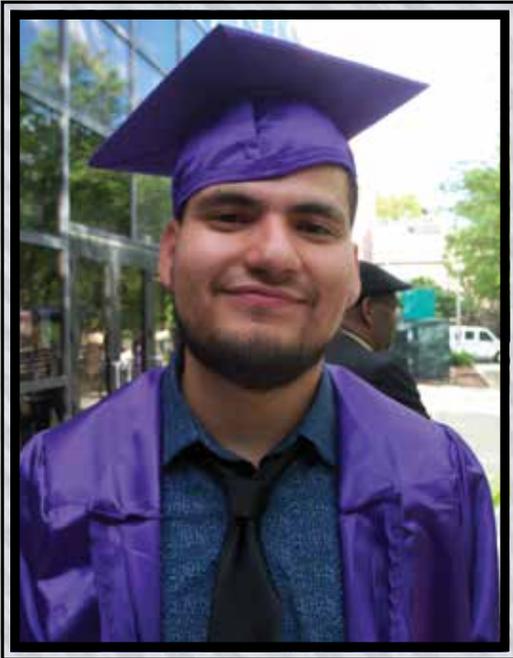
Alex enjoyed his classmates at HOPE's Front Range Academy as well.

"There are so many different personalities here and no one is afraid to be themselves," said Alex.

Mr. Scott Dare, a Mentor at Front Range Academy, and Alex have formed a tight bond since Alex started at the Learning Center in 7th grade. Alex loves Mr. Dare's personality, especially his understanding nature. Mr. Dare also thinks highly of Alex.

"Over the six years that he has been our student, Alex has grown to be the most dependable, thoughtful and unselfish young man that I've ever had in my class. He works hard and goes above and beyond every single day. Alex is a good student, but more than that, a great human being. I couldn't be more proud of him," said Mr. Dare.

LUIS MANRRIQUEZ JAQUEZ



Maranatha Learning Center

Class of **2018**

HOPE
ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY

Nine credits. That is what Luis Manrriquez Jaquez came with to HOPE's Maranatha Learning Center three years ago.

"I was struggling in school, and I was lazy," said Luis. "It was hard to focus, I was skipping classes and getting into trouble. My grades were bad too."

That all changed when he started at Maranatha Learning Center. His grades improved. He was waking up and getting to class. Luis finally saw he had educators in his life who believed he could do it.

"I am very thankful to everyone here," said Luis, who finished his classwork just before turning 21. "I was ready to give up. Here, I improved myself. I learned I was capable. I am a better person now, and I can become someone."

His academic team at Maranatha Learning Center appreciated his dedication.

"Though he didn't have many role models in his life, he knew education mattered and persevered to succeed," said Ms. Victoria Aguilar, Director of HOPE's Maranatha Learning Center.

Luis came to the United States from Mexico when he was four years old. His parents never earned their high school diplomas. Luis is currently working as a lumberjack, a job he has had for four years.

"I want to go to college and maybe get into the army. I would love to become an astronaut," said Luis. In December, Luis attended a Space Symposium in Denver through the invitation of HOPE Online Learning Academy Co-Op Board Member Mr. Joe Rice, who works for Lockheed Martin. That day inspired his future career ambitions.

When Luis started at Maranatha Learning Center, he had limited computer skills. But he quickly mastered how to use a computer and found working online easier to understand. Luis also appreciated the help he received from his teachers.

"They made sure I was doing it right. I became responsible," said Luis.

Luis loves movies and rap music. In school, he enjoyed History. Many of his classmates who graduated before him inspired him to keep going.

"If they could, I knew I could," said Luis.

Pride is the largest attribute Luis has gained through earning his diploma. He is looking forward to Graduation, walking across the stage and reaching an important milestone for himself and his family.

ADDISON PAYNE



Mountain View Academy

Class of 2018

HOPE

ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY

Addison Payne is completing her fifth year at HOPE's Mountain View Academy. She started attending in 8th grade at Tetra Academy in Lakewood, which merged with another HOPE Learning Center to form Mountain View Academy two years ago.

"I knew about HOPE because my older brothers went to Tetra," said Addison. "I was going to an all-girls school and didn't like it."

The learning pace at Addison's former school was a struggle for her. But when she came to HOPE Online Learning Academy Co-Op, that all changed.

"I could go at my own pace and make sure I understood the content. I think I learned more," said Addison. "I also liked the one-on-one attention I received from my teachers."

Addison became very close to the staff at Mountain View Academy. She was particularly fond of Mentor Ms. Valerie Nichol and Director Ms. Amanda Cancino, who she has been with since 8th grade. Addison was a personal babysitter for Ms. Nichol's children.

"Addison is a determined girl with a huge personality. Once she sets her mind on a goal, she does all that she can to make sure that she is successful," said Ms. Nichol. "Her dynamic personality and sense of responsibility makes her a great caregiver for my boys, and they love her to death! I never have to worry when they are with her."

In the fall, Addison will start at Red Rocks Community College. She plans to complete her basic classes there before transferring to a larger university. Addison wants to get into fashion and design. One of her favorite things to do outside of school is shop with her friends.

"I will be the first in my family to go to college. I know this will help me with my career," said Addison.

Addison finished her classes in December and has been working at Walmart in Littleton by her house. While at HOPE, Addison was very involved in extracurricular activities. She attended school dances and played volleyball each fall with her Learning Center. Addison was selected as HOPE's 2018 Prom Queen.

"It is great that HOPE has options like this. It made it feel like other schools," said Addison.

The atmosphere at Addison's HOPE Learning Center was her favorite part of school. She made a lot of friends and enjoyed the small, tight-knit community.

"There were so many people I could count on at HOPE. The personalities of the staff are great. They were goofy like me," said Addison.

Addison is proud she learned responsibility and how to take ownership of her schoolwork during her time at HOPE. She feels HOPE fits an important need in Colorado.

"HOPE helps kids who have a hard time learning in other schools," said Addison.

Valedictorian

GABRIEL GONZALEZ



New Hope Academy

Class of 2018

HOPE
ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY

Before coming to HOPE at New Hope Academy, Gabriel Gonzalez was getting into trouble at school.

“I was fighting and being disciplined by my teachers,” said Gabriel.

Gabriel made the switch to New Hope Academy in 7th grade. The caring environment helped him control his anger and gain more patience when working with people. He is now considered a leader at the Learning Center.

“He is a very determined young man who sees and respects the value and the process in getting an education. It has been a joy to watch him grow and develop through the years,” said Ms. Denise Duran, Director at New Hope Academy.

At New Hope, Gabriel has been involved in Student Council, serving as President for one year. One of their major projects was fundraising for a new bus for the Learning Center, which they also helped paint. Additionally, Gabriel has attended the HOPE Prom several times. His two younger siblings, high school juniors, are New Hope students as well.

“It was important for me to share all my talents and abilities with New Hope,” said Gabriel.

Gabriel enjoys the martial arts and working out. His favorite subject in school is Math, but he enjoyed lunch too as he likes to eat and values the friendships he has made at New Hope.

“The online curriculum at HOPE was challenging for me,” said Gabriel. “I like the one-on-one support I received when I got stuck and the offline supplemental instruction.”

In the fall, Gabriel is planning to be the first in his family to go to college. He is planning to attend North Central University in Minnesota, where his family is moving. He wants to become a secondary math teacher. During his last year at New Hope, Gabriel was a math tutor to his peers.

“I am good at math,” said Gabriel. “I want to inspire others and help them.”

Gabriel has worked hard to earn his diploma. He is also the first in his family to graduate from high school. Early on, he set a goal of being the valedictorian and is proud to have earned that role in the Class of 2018. Graduating was something he did for himself to better his future.

“You have to fight for it and not ever give into any outside pressures,” said Gabriel. “My family is excited and happy for me.”

The one part of HOPE Online Learning Academy Co-Op that Gabriel is most thankful for is the staff.

“The teachers are the best. There is always someone there to help you,” said Gabriel.



HIGDON DONELL ARMSTRONG V



Park Hill Academy

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The environment at HOPE's Park Hill Academy made all the difference for Higdon Donell Armstrong V (best known as Donnell). Donnell started at other area HOPE Learning Centers at the end of his elementary school years. These Learning Centers eventually became Park Hill Academy.

"I was a troublemaker in my old schools and got kicked out," said Donnell. "But at HOPE, I could sit down and learn at my own pace. I didn't feel the pressure like I did at my old schools. And I enjoyed the friends I made here."

In fact, Donnell and his friend Hector, who graduated in the Class of 2017, worked hand-in-hand and held each other accountable for finishing their schoolwork.

"You have to be self-motivated to not drop out," said Donnell. "Earning a diploma is important for a future job."

Donnell has gone through many tough family situations. He was in and out of foster care and over the past four years both of his foster parents passed away. Donnell currently lives with his biological parents.

"At a young age, they (my foster parents) made me feel like a smart kid," said Donnell. "They were always involved and helped me with my schoolwork."

While at HOPE, Donnell has played basketball and football. He has also attended Prom and participated in the HOPE Science Fair and attended several Career Fairs.

"The activities made it feel like a normal school," said Donnell. "My favorite event was playing basketball at the Pepsi Center. It was fun and really exciting! I got better at the sport over the high school years I got to play."

The future is bright for Donnell. He is interested in pursuing a career in boxing and/or music. He has been working in the music industry with his cousin and written several hip-hop songs. He has also scoped out talent for a music production company. Donnell wants to go to college to earn a music production degree. He also wants to train to be an amateur boxer, a sport he got into in 9th grade. He has always liked to fight, and boxing "allows him to do it in a positive way."

His Learning Center community is proud of the example he has set for his peers and the community.

"Donnell is a living example of fortitude. He has endured many setbacks and difficulties. They never caused him to lose sight of his goals. Donnell has persevered with grace and good humor. He is already a successful young businessman. I am positive that he will continue to learn and be successful. We wish him great success," said Ms. Amener Williams, Director of Park Hill Academy.

FRANSISCO SALAZAR



Power Academy

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HOPE
ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY

A HOPE Mentor, Ms. Harrison, at his former Learning Center is the reason that Fransisco Salazar did not drop out when he was in middle school.

“She called me and made sure I was at school. She would even pick me up and bring me,” said Fransisco. “I wish I had kept in touch with her.”

Fransisco was homeschooled in his early years and came to HOPE in middle school. He was behind when he started, but HOPE and Learning Center staff worked hard to get him back on-track.

“I wasn’t doing my work (in homeschool),” said Fransisco. “(At HOPE) I am expected to be here and am responsible for my own actions.”

His former Learning Center, Bridges of Silence Educational Center, closed two years ago. That is when Fransisco moved to HOPE’s Power Academy, which he says he likes the best.

“We are one big family. Everyone gets to know each other. I enjoy that there are more kids than homeschool,” said Fransisco.

While at Power, he has played soccer. He also helped coach other sports teams at the Learning Center. Fransisco is very interested in cars and wants to pursue a degree in diesel mechanics. He wants to own a garage one day and get into custom paint jobs. He currently paints interiors of homes.

“I do car maintenance, like oil changes and replacing and rotating tires,” said Fransisco.

Last year for a month Fransisco found himself homeless trying to seek a relationship with his father. His support system at HOPE Online Learning Academy Co-Op reached out when he was not attending and made sure he got back on track.

“It is important to never give up,” said Fransisco. “When you are at a point you don’t care, you are useless. Hold your own and don’t rely on others to be there for you.”

All of Fransisco’s siblings attend HOPE’s Power Academy and last year his sister, Mercedes, graduated from Power Academy. HOPE Building Resource Coordinator/Assistant Principal at Power Academy, Rudionna Garza Armstrong, says Fransisco is a “kind, quiet leader who likes to stay busy.” She has personally seen him be the “first student to get involved, whether it is to carry a bag or participate in volunteer opportunities such as feeding the homeless.”

Another HOPE staff member, who has known him since he started at HOPE, has seen Fransisco mature.

“When I met Fransisco (Kiko) he had just transferred to HOPE. He was angry and didn’t want relationships with staff, nor trust them. His attendance was spotty and his coping skills were sparse,” said Ms. Kristie Richardson, HOPE’s School Counselor. “Today this dynamic young man is at school daily. He laughs with staff, trusts when he needs help and goes out of his way to help others. Fransisco is always smiling, joking and letting what I believe to be his true self shine! It has been nothing short of amazing watching Kiko grow, open up and take control of his future.”

SKYLAR MURDOCK



Universal Learning Center

Class of 2018

HOPE
ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY

Skylar (also known as Sky) Murdock and her four younger siblings started attending HOPE's Universal Learning Center in Castle Rock two years ago after her 9-year-old brother started wrestling for the Sons of Thunder Academy, the wrestling club associated with the center. Universal Learning Center ended up not only being where her family went to school, it also became a learning environment that worked for Skylar.

"I had struggled in my past schools. My grades weren't the best. I had a hard time keeping up with my classmates. I found it overwhelming," said Skylar. "At Universal, I could go at my own pace and go through things again that I didn't understand. I liked the smaller, closer environment. The online work helped me keep track of my schoolwork."

The Murdock Family has resided in Black Hawk, a nearby Colorado mountain community in Gilpin County, for the last 11 years. Skylar's father works out of state. She has a close relationship with her mother.

"My mother and I are really close friends. We take care of each other. I look up to her. The two of us have gone through a lot," said Skylar.

This year marks the first time that HOPE's Universal Learning Center, which expanded to high school several years ago, will have graduates.

"We are very proud of the young woman Sky has become," said Ms. Kim Garcia, Building Resource Teacher at HOPE's Universal Learning Center. "She has worked very hard, and we are so excited to see her walk at Graduation. She is respected and loved by everyone and will have a bright future."

Skylar is planning to attend college in the fall. She has been accepted to Metropolitan State University of Denver, but may attend a community college first, and is interested in pursuing a degree in fashion. She is the only one in her immediate family who has attended college.

"Work hard, don't stress over reaching graduation day," said Skylar.

Outside of school, Skylar enjoys drawing, painting and hanging out with friends. She has worked hard to keep friendships at her former school, Gilpin County High School, as well. Skylar has attended two Homecoming dances/events at HOPE.

"My favorite part of school was seeing friends," said Skylar, who says she has made a lot of new friends at Universal too. "I like that there is not as much drama at Universal."

Skylar's favorite subjects in school are English, Reading and Science, particularly Earth Science.

"I am interested in the weather," said Skylar.

In January, Skylar completed her requirements to graduate. She has been working at her family's thrift store in Aurora, as well as helping at the Learning Center this spring.

