

# "We are victorious!" says R.I. School for Deaf grad

*projo.com -The Providence Journal - June 19, 2006*

01:00 AM EDT on Friday, June 16, 2006

BY EDWARD FITZPATRICK

Journal Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE -- Valedictorian Luis Angel Fernandez last night delivered this message to fellow graduates at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf: "We are victorious!"

"Don't live down to expectations," Fernandez said, using sign language. "Go out there and do something remarkable."

The school averages 8 to 10 graduates each year, but Fernandez was 1 of 4 who made up the Class of 2006. The other three were Bryan James Blaisdell, of Burrillville; Janet Elisa Cepeda, of Providence; and Markys Javier Concepcion, also of Providence.

Mayor David N. Cicilline spoke during the commencement, which brought together about 100 family members, friends, students and teachers. He apologized for not knowing sign language, but said he did know the sign for "congratulations," clasp his hands and shake them.

"This marks the end of a high school career, but the beginning of some new and exciting opportunities for you," Cicilline said.

The school's director, John Plante, detailed the background, accomplishments and characteristics of each graduate.

Fernandez, for example, was born in Puerto Rico, moved to the U.S. mainland at age 2, and now lives in Providence.

Plante described him as "incredibly bright" and "highly motivated." He recalled that, when he set up a meeting with Fernandez's mother, she feared her son might be in trouble -- but as it turned out, the school wanted to accelerate him academically.

Fernandez dreams of being a veterinarian, and he plans to go on to the Rochester (N.Y.) Institute of Technology, which has awarded him a \$10,000 scholarship, Plante said.

Fernandez urged other students to participate in as many school activities as possible, and he told them, "Education is the key to achievement for the future."

The graduates are:

Bryan J. Blaisdell

Janet E. Cepeda

Markys J. Concepcion

Luis A. Fernandez