

May 31, 2015

Former astronaut inspires Southland College Prep grads

Students graduating from Southland College Prep Charter High School in Richton Park were told earlier this month to become observers and look at the universe surrounding them, rather than looking at their digital devices, according to a press release from the school.

Doing the speaking was an accomplished woman who had quite a look at the universe: former NASA astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison, a graduate of Morgan Park High School in Chicago who in 1992 became the first African-American woman to travel in space when she was aboard Space Shuttle Endeavour. Jemison now leads 100 Year Starship, an initiative seed-funded by the U.S. Department of Defense designed to assure capability for human interstellar space travel within the next 100 years, the release said.

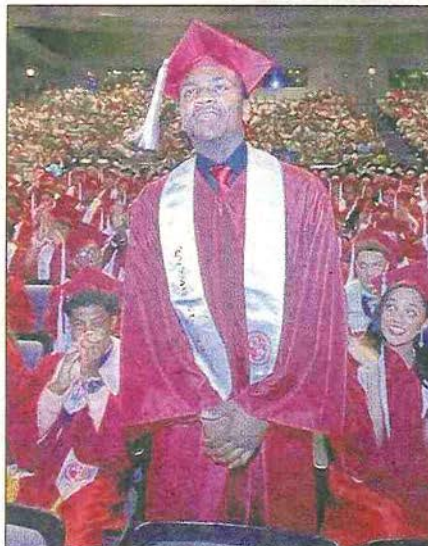
In ceremonies held May 22 at Harris Theater at Millennium Park in Chicago, Jemison told 109 graduating seniors that their potential was unlimited and to enjoy and relish their college careers, the release said.

Southland CEO Blondean Y. Davis said every member of Southland's Class of 2015 has been accepted to college, the release said, and class members were offered a combined \$13.2 million in merit scholarships.

During the ceremony, it was announced that Victor Banjoko, of Country Club Hills, had earned the Ronald Blackstone Memorial Scholarship award, the release said. He plans to major in physics and engineering in a dual-degree program at Morehouse College and Georgia Tech in hopes of becoming an orthopedic surgeon and working in Nigeria, his family's country of origin, the release said.

Amy Kwarteng, 18, of Matteson, had a 4.71 grade-point average and spoke at commencement as valedictorian, the release said. She plans to study psychology or cognitive science at Yale University, it said.

Daily Southtown staff report



SOUTHLAND COLLEGE PREP PHOTOS

Above: Victor Banjoko is recognized at the May 22 graduation ceremony for Southland College Prep Charter High School held at the Harris Theater at Millennium Park in Chicago. **Below:** Dr. Mae Jemison speaks at the May 22 graduation ceremony.

