A nurse, a counselor, a sociologist

Cabrillo College graduated 1,267 Friday

By TODD GUILD
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

APTOs — Six years after serv-
ing a four-month sentence in Santa
Cruz County Jail for a drug crime,
Robbie DeMarco walked across the
stage at Cabrillo College Fri-
day to receive his associate’s
degree, boasting a 3.7 grade point
average.

With plans to go to UC Berkeley
in the fall to study human services,
DeMarco has hopes to someday
 counsel people coming out of
jail and prison. His accomplish-
ment brought him full-circle from
needing such services to someday
being qualified to provide them.

DeMarco, now 48, said he suf-
f ered from a learning disability and
didn’t finish high school, thanks in
part to drug addiction.

After he was released from jail,
he said he was homeless for two
years as he lived in the Salvation
Army shelter in Watsonville.

“I didn’t have any direction in
my life,” he said. “I didn’t have any
idea what I wanted to do.”

It was there he began to get
involved in his community, per-
forming in the church choir and
helping out around the place.

He also heard about Cabrillo’s
ACE program, which is designed
to help students in his position en-
ter college.

DeMarco excelled academi-
cally and for the past two years
has been working as a student

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Anthony Little prepares to graduate in Culinary Arts.

CARBILLO
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Intern at the Cabrillo Learning
Communities Center where he
has helped at-risk students who
want to go to college.

During his time at Cabrillo,
DeMarco won the Martin Luther
King Essay and completed an
internship at the Salvation Army
shelter in Watsonville. He has
been drug-free for five years.

“I feel great,” he said. “My life
has turned around.”

DeMarco was one of 1,267
students who participated in
the graduation ceremony at
Carl Connelly Stadium, with 836
A.A. degrees, 433 A.S. degrees,
140 certificates of achievement,
and 251 skills certificates. The
graduates ranged from 18 to 73
with an average age of 30.

Female graduates exceeded
the males, making up 61 percent
of the class.

Adrianna Mee, 21, also strug-
gled with drug use before get-
ing clean. She graduated with
an associate’s degree in sociol-
ogy.

“I’m sober but I’m grateful,
very grateful,” she said. “As far
as I’m concerned I’m not really
supposed to be alive. I never
thought I’d be here.”

She has been sober for nearly
four years. She will attend UC
Berkeley in the fall to study
sociology.

Asked for her advice for peo-
ple going through similar strug-
gles, Mee’s advice was simple:
seek help from trusted people.

“You don’t need to carry
your burden alone,” she said.
Whatever it is — mine was
addiction — no matter what
it is there are people who can
help you. What helped me was
that I had a team of people at
Cabrillo who helped point me
in the right direction.”

Anamaria Guzman migrated
to the U.S. from Michoacan,
Mexico with her parents and six
siblings.

Taken out of school to work
in the fields at 11, she never at-
tended middle or high school.

Inspired when her mother
decided to attend adult school,
Guzman joined her, a step that

ABOVE: Graduates prepare to take their seats. BELOW: Family members and friends put on a
colorful display during the ceremony.

helped her learn English.

But she also discovered a
love for learning.

She was married in 1988 and
enrolled in Cabrillo’s Center for
Employment Training.

She took off skills class-
es and earned her GED, had
two children and began work-
ing. That’s where a mentor
encouraged her to go back to
school. She started at Cabrillo
in 2002 taking one class per
semester, and she graduated
Friday with an associate’s in
liberal arts.

She is scheduled to start the
Nursing Program in Spring 2016.