

LCMR valedictorian, lifeguard stresses hard work

By RACHEL SHUBIN
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — There are some students who graduate from high school knowing the field in which they want to specialize, and Mishell Sanchez is one of them. The Class of 2017 valedictorian and recent graduate of Lower Cape May Regional High School plans to study civil engineering at the University of Delaware in the fall.

But not before finishing her summer as a member of the Cape May Point Beach Patrol. Sanchez was representing her team last week at the CMPBP Women's Lifeguard Challenge. The former high school distance runner competed with fellow CMPBP lifeguard Abby Thompson at the challenge Aug. 1 at St. Pete's Beach.

The challenge included a 1.2-mile run on soft sand, followed by a half-mile paddleboard race and then another run down the beach before finishing with a half-mile swim. Thirty-four lifeguards from 12 beach patrols completed the course.

Sanchez, 18, graduated June 14 No. 1 in her class. Her speech addressed the students' transition from high school to adulthood and whether they chose to pursue higher education, enter the workforce or military.

"Even though we all came from one school, we all take different paths after high school. We should be thankful for school preparing us for the future," Sanchez said.

She started her education at Cape May City Elementary School and continued at Richard M. Teitelman Middle School. Sanchez's educational journey was strengthened by the motivation of her teachers, she said. In elementary school, she was placed in the Program for Academic and Creative Enrichment (PACE), which was geared toward students with STEM interest, or science, technology engineering and math-

ematics.

"At a very young age, I was shown the importance of education and the teachers I had always placed emphasis on paying attention to their students. I learned to have a strong work ethic," Sanchez said. "Every year you had to work to stay in the program and it taught me that things aren't handed to you in life, you have to work for it to be meaningful and want it to last."

By staying in the PACE program, Sanchez learned to improve herself and work hard to get ahead. The program helped her identify her learning and thinking process, and what kind of jobs she would find in the STEM field.

"My parents were a great influence for me. They always helped my little sister and I with our homework. We were taught to work before you play," Sanchez said. "Growing up with that mentality at home, school and on sports teams, it was engraved in me that you have to have structure in your life to be successful. You have to have fun, be a kid and have free time, while keeping your eye on the prize and working to get what you want."

During high school, Sanchez went to visit her elementary school teachers.

"Some of my favorite teachers are at the elementary school," she said. "It was a great experience being in that school and keeping in touch with the teachers and friends I made there."

In high school, Sanchez took classes in Project Lead the Way (P.L.T.W.), which included introduction to architecture and engineering; specifically, civil engineering.

"Civil engineering seemed interesting to me because it brought out the nature-oriented personality I have, like being a lifeguard for Cape May Point. I considered what type of occupations I could potentially find in the engineering field,"



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—Mishell Sanchez, scholar athlete

Sanchez said. She said she had a great experience in the P.L.T.W. program. Small classes and close relationships with the teachers allowed her to challenge herself and expand upon the previous year's knowledge.

Two of the P.L.T.W. teachers, Frank Toth and Raymond Obst, were exceptional, she said. Sanchez had Obst for math for three years.

"Having the same teacher



David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE
Scholar athlete Mishell Sanchez represents the Cape May Point Beach Patrol during the CMPBP Women's Lifeguard Challenge last week. She also was valedictorian of her class.

for three years allowed him to know us as individuals and not just students. We know what kind of a teacher he was and it was fun to be in the class," Sanchez said.

She said she had wonderful teachers all four years of high school.

"I always had great teachers who were really dedicated and devoted to the students," she said.

Sanchez had the opportunity to attend a leadership conference with Student Council in which she heard about water pollution in Third World countries and the detrimental effects that unsanitary water has on the local population.

"I have always been the kind of person to try and help, and when I heard about this terrible situation, I looked at how civil

engineers designed waterway systems for the United States. They make it easy for us to drink tap water and take showers. I thought, 'Why can't we bring that somewhere else?'" she said.

Sanchez hopes to have the opportunity after college to go abroad to help those in need.

"Once I graduate college, I hope I can get into international affairs through engineering and help design waterway systems like ours that would stop the death of people who are just trying to drink water," Sanchez said. "It's the culmination of everything that civil engineering entails. The chance to experience new locations, help people in need and be outdoors."

Being outdoors is a must for Sanchez.

"I've been swimming forever and I was on the high school swim team all four years. I ran track and field during the spring and cross country in the fall for four years," she said.

Sanchez became friends with other Student Council members and teammates. Joining extracurricular activities gave her an opportunity to make friends and grow as a person.

Sanchez is a lifeguard with Cape May Point Beach

Patrol, one of the smallest in the South Jersey Lifeguard Chiefs Association.

"As a lifeguard, you need to be ready and alert and aware of your surroundings. It's a pretty rewarding job," she said. "You're a guardian angel over those people in the water."

Sanchez has been part of a couple of rescues while on patrol.

"It's the adrenaline rush of the job, when you hear that call over the radio for the rescue on the beach. You run down the beach not knowing what you're going to find. We haven't had anything too bad," she said.

Sanchez and fellow lifeguards rescued two young men who flipped over in a canoe.

"They had been canoeing for a couple of days from Pennsylvania, so they had bins of clothes and food on board. It sank and some of their stuff was gone, but we brought them in safely. It was a memorable rescue," she said.

Sanchez is a people person, so with a future career in engineering, she can focus on the designs and the people that her future job could affect, and not strictly the math and science aspect.

"This opportunity allows me help on a large scale, which I feel that's the human purpose to help at least a little every day. With this job, it would be perfect for me because I'm combining something I enjoy doing and helping people at the same time," Sanchez said.

Engineering is not just the construction of buildings, which Sanchez is quick to explain.

"You have to dig deep and see all the things you can do. Be curious," she said.

Coming from a graduating class of 180 to the University of Delaware's 22,000 undergraduates will be a large change for Sanchez. After going on an open house tour, she became friendly with a mechanical engineering student at the university. The student told Sanchez about the program and campus life as a Blue Hen. Sanchez applied to the University of Delaware and was accepted with a partial scholarship.

"I thought Delaware would be a different experience than being in Cape May. I love Cape May. It's a great little town where everyone knows everyone. But I'm ready for something different," Sanchez said. "But the school is close enough to home if I want to come home, which is nice."

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	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
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10	10:28	10:42	4:11	4:16
11	11:08	11:23	4:49	5:02
12	11:52		5:31	5:53
13	12:08	12:43	6:16	6:51
14	1:01	1:40	7:07	7:55
15	2:02	2:44	8:05	9:04
16	3:12	3:52	9:08	10:13

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