CLAREMONT — On Friday, May 22, more than 220 students from River Valley Community College (RVCC) joined with family, friends, faculty, administration and community members to celebrate the school's 47th commencement, and the beginning of their adult lives.

The procession was led by bagpiper Andy Chamberlain playing "Scotland The Brave" as President Alicia B. Harvey-Smith, Ph.D. led the graduates to their seats. She was joined by marshals Tiffany Hardy and Michelle Lockwood, and faculty marshals Bonnie Akerman, JoAnn Clifford, Richard Andrusiak and Todd Lloyd.

The entire assembly joined Courtney Elizabeth Davis, a graduate from the human services program, in singing the National Anthem. The Invocation was done by Reverend Paul Boucher of the RVCC advisory board and President and CEO of the Lebanon Area Chamber of Commerce.

“Balancing was a strong theme this year. You found creative solutions, time management skills and you were determined to meet your goals,” said Harvey-Smith to the students.

Andrew Duncklee, a graduate from the computer technology and cybersecurity and healthcare IT program, gave the greeting from the Class of 2015.

“It was not an easy road but we made it. Look around you and take stock in what you’ve accomplished,” he said. “Your time at River Valley should serve you well.”

The Activities Award was given to the Massage Therapy Club; the President’s Award was given to Andrea Spinale, a graduate from the physical therapist assistant program.

The Phi Theta Kappa 2015 Teacher of the Year Award was given to Dawn A. Smith, the Chancellor’s Award for Teaching Excellence was given to Kim-Laura Boyle, the Chancellor’s
Award for Service Excellence was given to Michelle Lockwood, and the new President’s Envisioning the Future Award was given to Laurie Clute and Harvey Hill.

The commencement speech was given by Peter J. Wright, Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives and President and Chief Executive Officer at Valley Regional Healthcare.

“There are two things I want you to leave with. The first is a smile. Life is incredibly short and difficult. The second is that you leave here with one piece of advice,” Wright said.

“If you desire it, I have no doubt you can attain it,” he said. “You need to do three things: believe in yourself … define your values … and never let anyone tell you you can’t do something.”

Spinale presented Wright with a gift, then Melissa Richmond on flute was joined by soprano Angela Biggs for the musical tribute to the graduating class.

Dr. Vincent Mumford, vice president of academic affairs, spoke about the Tradition of the Rose.

“The rose symbolized the budding new career path taken by the graduate. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the graduate is to complete the circle of recognition by presenting the rose to the person who most significant in helping them complete this important milestone,” Mumford explained.

The presentation of candidates for certificates, diplomas and degrees was done by Mumford. The presentation of certificates, diplomas and degrees were done by Harvey-Smith; Kristyn Van Ostern, associate vice chancellor; and Kim Trisciani, board of trustees for the Community College System of New Hampshire. Harvey-Smith performed the conferring and the changing of the tassels.

Diane Gauthier, admissions and alumni specialist, welcomed the graduates as alumni, then Reverend Ken Czechowicz, professor in the respiratory therapy program, gave the benediction. Chamberlain played Scotland the Brave during the recessional.