

Alumni honored for achievements



Kevin Flanders photos

Ray Martinez Jr., encourages students to follow their dreams during the Distinguished Alumni program on April 7.

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STONEBRIDGE STAFF WRITER

SPENCER – High school students often hear about the many opportunities available to them for success, but last week's visitors to David Prouty High School prove that small town kids can do big things.

The school invited a pair of former Panthers back to where it all began last Friday, April 7, as part of the annual Distinguished Alumni Program. Reverend James Mazzone (Class of 1985) and Ray Martinez Jr. (Class of 1982), were selected as this year's recipients.

Please Read **ALUMNI**, page A16



Reverend James Mazzone addresses students at David Prouty High School during the Distinguished Alumni program.

ALUMNI

continued from page A1

Mazzone, the founder and director of the Holy Name of Jesus House of Studies, graduated from St. Anselm's College in New Hampshire and continued his education at St. Mary's Seminary and College in Maryland. He obtained advanced degrees in sacred theology, and he was ordained as a priest in 1999.

Martinez is the co-founder of EverFi, a technology company focused on providing financial education to young people. He put EverFi on the map with the idea that cutting-edge technology could be leveraged by teachers, schools, and communities to measure critical life skills that are not being taught in the classroom. Since its humble beginnings, EverFi has expanded to provide education to students at all levels.

DPHS officials were

thrilled to bring back both former Panthers, who exemplify what can happen when you set a goal and work hard to reach it.

"The annual award recognizes graduates who have achieved success in careers and life since leaving the school," said Richard Gaudette, a member of the Distinguished Alumni selection committee.

Added SEBRSD Superintendent Tracy Crowe, "Prouty has a proud legacy, and it is my pleasure to award these certificates."

Both alumni guests discussed their paths to success and the people who helped them along the way. Mazzone is a consultant to many dioceses in immigration, student and religious worker visa policies, and permanent residency and United States citizenship. In recognition of his work, he was awarded the St. Mary's Seminary Jean Jacques Olier Distinguished Alumnus medal in October

2014.

But Mazzone didn't want to spend much time talking about himself, instead providing helpful insights to students. One of his most impactful messages involved the need to put away a ubiquitous distracter for today's students – their cell phones.

"There is a real toughness I see in today's teenagers. They know that the harder you work, the smarter you get," Mazzone told guests. "But I don't want you to miss out on those glorious stretches of time to yourself to think and wonder and dream. Being alone with your thoughts will change your life for the better."

For Martinez, a return to Prouty is circled on his calendar every year, as he awards certificates to DPHS students who participate in the EverFi curriculum. He can always count on a Prouty visit each May to hand out the certificates, but he was surprised and honored to get

a call for the Distinguished Alumni program.

Martinez has many great memories at DPHS, and he hopes to encourage students to pursue their own ambitions and never forget their roots.

"We are only as strong as the communities we come from," Martinez said. "It's important to take pride in where you're from – great things happen in small towns."

The DPHS Distinguished Alumni awards have been presented for more than 20 years. Portraits of all recipients hang in the DPHS foyer, and this year's honorees urged students to take a moment to reflect on the many people who have impacted their careers.

"We should all take the time to thank the teachers and coaches who dedicated their lives to helping us reach our potential," Martinez said.