

# Seniors ready to take on the real world

After graduation June 23, senior Zach Milligan will head off to basic training in Fort Knox, Ky.

By AMY CAVALIER

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After spending the past few months running the bleachers after school at Penfield High School to prepare for Army basic training, walking down the aisle to pick up a diploma will be a cakewalk for senior Zach Milligan.

While many seniors will be heading off to college this fall, Milligan has chosen a different path.

"I figure I can get the same education, if not better, with the Army and they pay me for going to school instead of me paying to go to school," he said.

Milligan will graduate along with the other members of the Penfield High School class of 2007 at the Eastman Theatre on Saturday, June 23. Larry Man, a special education teacher at Penfield High and co-adviser of the senior class, said he's sad to see the students go.

"It's a cliché, but the growth you see over these four years is more so than any period in a child's life," he said. "You see them go from children to young adults ... The great thing is thinking that just four years ago, I had to walk them through everything. Now we're sending them off as adults to college, to really change the world, and make a difference and be my social security when I retire."

Man said the class of 2007 was very community-service oriented. They donated \$1,000 to Water for Sudan, an effort to dig wells in Africa, and students served as leaders in the school.

As for Milligan, he will head to basic training at Fort Knox, Ky., on July 3. He wants to

## Save the date:

The Penfield High School class of 2007 graduation ceremonies will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday, June 23, at the Eastman Theatre in Rochester.

learn to become a light-wheel vehicle mechanic for the U.S. Army, which entails working on the diesel engines and Humvees.

"It was either that or be a military police," he said. "I chose something I had experience in."

Originally from Newark, N.Y., Milligan has lived in Penfield since he was 13. He started in Penfield schools as an eighth-grader.

Milligan found his calling in Tedd Scott's auto shop class in his junior year.

"I couldn't believe how much I learned," he said. "I've always had an interest in cars. I wanted to learn how they worked so I could actually talk about them."

He took it to the next level in his senior year, signing up for auto mechanics at Monroe No. 1 BOCES. Every day, he'd leave school around lunchtime to spend the rest of his school day immersed in brake, suspension, electronics and diagnostics work. Some of the time was spent at a desk, but much more was spent in the lab, learning about cars by doing.

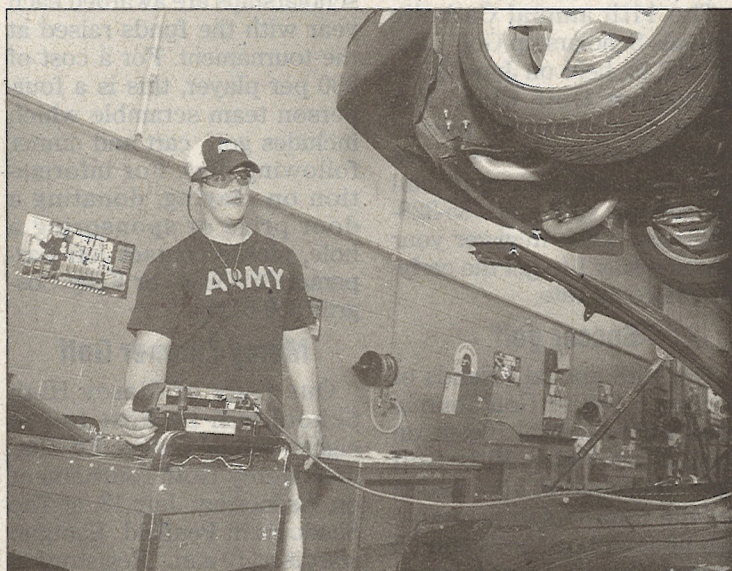
In his high school career, Milligan played varsity football his junior year and worked part time at Pontillo's Pizzeria. Now, with less than a month to go before he begins basic training, Milligan said he's doing his best to relax and spend time with family.

Milligan said he's relieved to be graduating. His family will celebrate with a party June 30.

"I'm really excited not to have to worry about school anymore," he said.

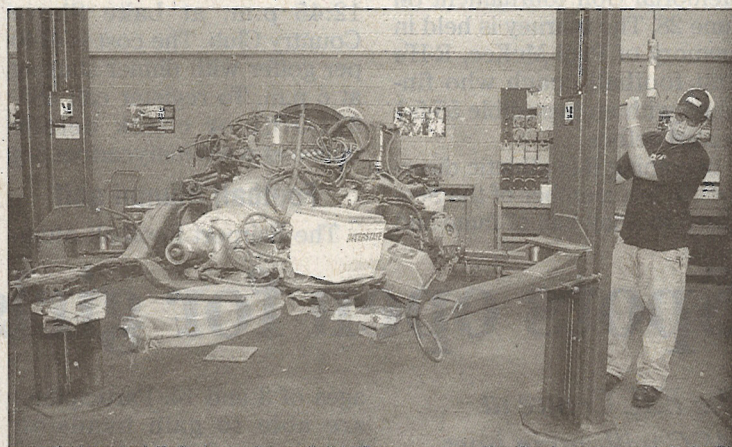
That doesn't mean he'll be worry-free. There is the risk he could be called up to serve overseas.

"That's a risk I'm willing to



STAFF PHOTOS/CARRIE ANN GRIPPO

Senior Zach Milligan of Penfield uses the computer to pull trouble codes on a car at Monroe County No. 1 BOCES in Fairport on Monday. He is heading off the basic training for the U.S. Army after graduation.



Zach Milligan lowers an engine using a lift at Monroe County No. 1 BOCES in Fairport on Monday.

take," he said. "At least I can say I've done something for my country."

He expects a transitioning from civilian life to being in the Army will be a challenge. He's already studying his basic orders and learning the phonetic alphabet, which is used in radio codes. He also watches the news for reports about the war in Iraq.

"I don't necessarily believe in the war, but I'm not gonna protest it," he said. "I know my parents don't want to see me go over there ... but you kind of have to accept it. Unfortunately, you can't choose where

you go. You go where they need you."

His father, Steven Milligan, lives in Newark and his mother, Patricia Lembo, lives in Penfield. Eventually, Milligan said, he wouldn't mind owning an auto shop, or even working as a state trooper or an FBI agent.

"The future is wide open," he said of graduating. "It's the beginning of a new life, life after high school, life as a real adult, I guess."

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