

#schoollife – Building a Legacy – May 15, 2014

When thousands walk the stage at this year's graduation ceremonies, some will have an extra reason to celebrate ... as the VERY FIRST in their families to earn a high school diploma.

CCISD recognizes these students at the annual "First in Family" ceremony, where they receive a medal to wear on graduation day ... a statement that they have overcome the odds.

Bruce Wilson, Principal – Evans SES

16:15 It shows there are more and more kids not giving up ... it's unfortunate some family members may have faced challenges that didn't allow them to finish up high school, but yet you see this number of kids that haven't given up the fight and they're still going to be motivated and want to make a difference in their family.

Gabrielle Garcia – Miller HS Graduate

8:22 It's a big honor because it's such a big thing to my family – I'm the first, and the first grandchild to graduate.

Emmanuel Vega – Moody HS Graduate

11:56 I was hoping to become a role model for my siblings so they, too, can believe that they are able to graduate and have a career and have a better life.

For these graduates, having "a better life" means building a legacy in their households ... that, for many, began with those who sacrificed to see them succeed.

Martha Martinez – Collegiate HS

3:51 I am Mexican – my parents are Mexican as well. For me to get here it took my Mom to have the courage to leave everything that was known to her – everything that she had, everything that she knew – for her to have the courage to leave everything behind and start new for me.

4:17 She left my brother and father behind for a few months while she was able to get a home and a decent job to provide and put a meal on our plates ... and that meant a lot to me ...

4:32 It was honestly a hard experience – I didn't speak English, all this was a new world to me – it was a different experience and I just had to go along with it ...

Many of these students had to work especially hard -- to learn English like Martha, or working full time jobs to help pay the bills ...

... so now, they plan to make the most of their high school education.

Martha Martinez

5:15 I'm just another example that anything is possible. I am one of the examples of the American dream ... and I am here today – my parents gave it all for me, and I will give it all for them.