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Three Rivers Celebrates Class of 2016 Commencement Ceremony

MAY 29TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - Three Rivers College filled the Black River Coliseum to celebrate the institution's newest graduating class on Friday, May 20. Over 570 students in Three Rivers' degree and certificate programs were eligible to walk across the stage during Friday's ceremony.

Erick Kirkman, a Three Rivers alumnus, Poplar Bluff resident, and successful entrepreneur, gave the commencement speech to the Class of 2016. In his speech, Kirkman encouraged graduates to seek success and follow their dreams, even if those dreams seem difficult to achieve. He also told graduates to hold themselves to a high standard, even if it was hard.

"I would say to worry about your character, and not your reputation," said Kirkman. "Those seem like the same thing, but they're very different. Your reputation is who people think you are; your character is who you are when no one is watching."

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Three Rivers, the college Choir, directed by Cindy White, Professor of Music, performed an arrangement of "The Sound of Silence," which was the music performed at Three Rivers' first commencement.

"It is gratifying to me to see so many graduates heading off into a better life with a degree from Three Rivers," said Williams. "It's my pleasure to greet you all not only as new

graduates, but as fellow alumni of Three Rivers.”

The college honored several outstanding graduates at the ceremony, and recognized its many first-generation, non-traditional, veteran, international, and multi-generation graduates. Among the individual graduates spotlighted were:

- Justas Furmanavicius, an international student from Lithuania, who came to the United States after being recruited to play for the Raiders Basketball team.
- Ann Mati, an international student whose Three Rivers journey started with a full day of classes after a 24-hour trip from her home in Kenya, and who received a Student Excellence Award for her work in the Honors Program.
- Jennifer Beck, a first-generation student who came to Three Rivers after entering the workforce as an LPN. She graduated alongside her daughter, who helped encourage her to start classes at Three Rivers.
- Dorothy Rose, a non-traditional student who began her college career after marrying and raising five boys. She graduated with an Associate of Arts with an emphasis in General Education and plans to substitute teach at Twin Rivers.
- Gabby and Michaela Mays, twin sisters who came to Three Rivers under the A+ program and served as Resident Assistants in housing at the Poplar Bluff Campus.
- James Norman, a student veteran who served in the Navy as an Aviation Electronics Technician. He has served in leadership positions within the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and the student art club. He plans to transfer to Southeast Missouri State University to complete his art degree.

This year marks the 48th anniversary of the college’s first commencement ceremony since Three Rivers was founded in 1966. Since then, Three Rivers has served over 100,000 students from its degree, transfer, and career-technical programs. Registration is currently open for Fall classes at Three Rivers. To learn more about registering for classes at Three Rivers, call the Welcome Center at 573-840-9605 or visit trcc.edu.

Three Rivers College is committed to contributing to the quality of life in Southeast Missouri with quality, affordable higher education opportunities and community services that support and encourage the economic, civic, and cultural vitality of the region. For more information about college and workforce programs and upcoming events, visit trcc.edu.

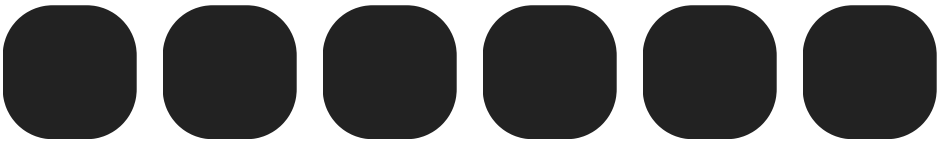
Shown in the photo is James Norman, a student veteran and member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, stands to be recognized by Three Rivers College President Dr. Wesley Payne during Three Rivers’ 2016 Commencement Ceremony

at the Black River Coliseum on May 20.

LAST UPDATED ON MAY 29TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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