

Features



Graduate Fulfills 30-Year Dream with Southeast Degree

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Achieving a college degree has been a goal of Amber Hornbeck for nearly 30 years.

She graduated this month from Southeast Missouri State University with a Bachelor of General Studies.

“I remain hopeful about the future and grateful to have had the opportunity to complete a degree program at a University so close to home,” she said.

Amber celebrated graduating from Southeast with her son Cooper; brother-in-law, Larry Duncan; and her sister Janice Duncan.

After earning an Associate of Arts in middle school education from Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff in 2018, Hornbeck decided to complete her higher education journey with classes at Southeast’s Poplar Bluff delivery site.

Being able to earn her degree in her hometown of Poplar Bluff allowed her to continue her work as a news clerk at the Daily American Republic while also fulfilling her responsibilities as a single mother to her 16-year-old son, Cooper.

“I wanted to lead by example to show him that anything is possible if you simply dedicate yourself and maintain focus on your goals,” she said.

The support she received from her professors and advisors was instrumental.

Amber decorated her Southeast mortarboard with an image of her parents, in honor of her promise to them to earn her four-year degree.

“A sincere and heartfelt thank you to all my fellow Redhawks, instructors and staff who played a role in guiding me through my degree program,” she said.

The help she received from Pauletta Burns, coordinator of academic and student services at Southeast’s Poplar Bluff Delivery Site, guided her towards success both personally and academically.

“Had it not been for the due diligent advising of Pauletta, I would have abandoned my dreams” after several academic and financial challenges, Hornbeck said. “She is the consummate encourager and champion to all those she counsels.”

As she contemplates the future, Hornbeck hopes to be an example for and help advise other non-traditional students navigate their return to college.

“Graduation with a college degree was the fulfillment of a promise I had made years earlier to my late parents — their image adorns my Southeast mortarboard,” she said. “I am proud to call myself a Southeast alumna!”

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