



CUTLINE: Southern State Community College honorees in the annual AOC Recognition Celebration include (first row, l-r) Tiffany Straight, Lynda Thurman, Trudy Barnett, Casey Gillis, Halie Burkholder, Ashley Ki*bbey, Anthony Zook, Robert Doss; (second row, l-r) Francisco Cruz, Brooke Perkins, Tim Fisher, Viky Beuckert, Cheryle Hart, Casey Cox, Christina Marquis, Greg Young Jr.; (third row, l-r) Michael Hammer, Bobbi Gill, Ashley Forsha, Alexia Bennett, Cassandra Dees, Larry Moore, Johnny Shaffer; (back row, l-r) Tiffany Miller, Tristen Teboe, Melissa Wells, Kayla Purcell, Rikki Stutz, Amanda Aldrich, and Allison Zornes.

SSCC's Adult Opportunity Center holds recognition celebration

Area residents who passed the General Education Development (GED) test were honored June 1 at the 29th annual Adult Opportunity Center's Recognition Celebration at Southern State Community College's Central Campus in Hillsboro.

For the 2016-17 academic year, the Adult Opportunity Center served 440 students. Of those students, 365 enrolled in one of the AOC classes and more than 50 percent improved at least one level. So far, 69 students have received their GEDs, and many have already started their college careers at Southern State.

Guest speaker Drew Hastings, the mayor of Hillsboro and himself a GED recipient, was

invited to address this year's honorees.

"I'll tell you something I don't talk about very much," he started. "My name is Drew Hastings and when I was 7, my dad up and left my mom. His name is also Drew Hastings. So he immediately remarries and they have a baby. His new wife says, 'I want you to forget you ever had another family and we're going to name our new baby Drew Hastings.' By the time I was 8, there were now three Drew Hastings. There was me, the one who left me, and the one who replaced me. Is it any wonder I wanted to make a name for myself?"

"So did I become a famous comedian and buy up a bunch of real estate and become the mayor of this city all because I got my GED? Of course not. I used that pain in my life, and that feeling that I was not good enough, to drive me to make something of myself.

"You all have pain in your life, and some of you maybe think you're not good enough. Don't ever wallow in it. Don't ever feel sorry for yourself. Use that pain to make yourself better, to make something of yourself.

"I read something recently: 'Everything you ever wanted is on the other side of fear.' I promise you that is the truth. That's how you got your GED, when you think about it. All your fears – you managed to get over them. And here you are.

"The next thing you think you can't do – you *can* do it. This GED is proof that you get things done."

Following Hastings' speech, Karyn Evans, Dean of SSCC's Adult Opportunity Center, addressed the audience and said that – counting the 2016-17 class – more than 20,000 students have now been served since the program's inception.

Evans then announced the names of honor students who achieved high scores on the tests: Johnny Shaffer (Social Studies and Science), Ashlyn Morris (Reasoning through Language Arts), and Tiffany Miller (Mathematical Reasoning).

A Trustee Scholarship for three college credit hours is awarded to any student who successfully passes the GED. Trustee Honor Scholarships, awarded to the highest scorers from their respective counties, were presented to Jennifer Culver (Clermont County) and Cassandra Dees (Highland County).

The annual "Friends of Aspire" award was presented to Family Recovery Services (FRS) Counseling.

GED preparation is offered free of charge through the Aspire program at Southern State's Adult Opportunity Center (AOC), under the direction of Karyn Evans, with assistance from staff, part-time instructors and volunteers.

Through Southern State's Adult Opportunity Center, Aspire classes are free and offered on each campus and in several off-campus locations. All books and materials are provided. Morning, afternoon or evening classes are available for adult literacy, GED preparation, nursing program preparation, college refresher courses, workforce education, and reading, writing and math improvement.

Southern State's Aspire program is a state and federally funded program offered at no charge to participants. Orientation is the first step for all enrolling students and pre-registration is required. For more information, please visit www.sccc.edu/specialized/aoc.shtml or contact Southern State's Adult Opportunity Center at 1-800-628-7722, ext. 2687.