



Photo Caption: Current student Lori Catron (left) is pictured with Human and Social Services instructor Patricia Beach (right) as they review an assignment during a class lecture. Catron is preparing for her Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor II (LCDC II) Exam.

Southern State Student Expresses Gratitude for Inspiring Teachers

A Southern State student is expressing heartfelt appreciation for the dedicated educators who have made a lasting impact on her academic journey and personal growth.

Lori Catron, a current student majoring in Human and Social Services: Chemical Dependency, credits her success to the support, encouragement, and passion of her instructors, particularly Human and Social Services instructor Patricia Beach. “Instructor Beach is truly wonderful, and I am so grateful for great teachers,” comments Catron.

From the very beginning of her journey, Catron says she was encouraged and motivated by the faculty at Southern State. Her former instructor, Charlie Gorman, was the first person to help her believe she belonged in college. “I was scared to even think about going back to school at 40,” Catron shares. “Charlie not only encouraged me to try, but he also hired me

for my first role in the field and then became my professor for several semesters. His belief in me helped me believe in myself.”

Catron also expresses deep appreciation for longtime instructor Mike Jones. “Mr. Jones is truly one of a kind—full of knowledge, compassion, and a genuine passion for teaching,” she says. “He has been a true inspiration to many of us who had the pleasure of learning from him.”

As Southern State’s Human and Social Services program continued to grow and evolve, instructor Beach stepped into teaching several of the classes the students once took with Gorman and Jones. Catron admits that, at first, students were unsure what to expect. “We all wondered, ‘Who is she, and how will she teach us?’” remembers Catron. “I can say, without a doubt, that she has stepped into that role and fills those shoes above expectation. We all have our own ways of teaching and learning, and instructor Beach has made it exceptional for us. She is loving, kind, and considerate, and she teaches with both passion and guidance.”

Catron recalls a time when she was unable to attend class. “Instructor Beach made sure I could still learn, grow, and stay connected through my writing,” recalls Catron. “What I’ve appreciated most is her willingness to share her real experiences; the kind that reminds me that growth often comes through vulnerability,” Catron notes.

Dr. Erika Goodwin, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs at Southern State, is proud of the success that Catron experienced. “Community colleges are built on the power of connection and stories like Catron’s remind us why our mission to support students at every step is so important.”

“Our faculty, as well as our staff, are committed to student success – always,” says Goodwin.

At the heart of Catron’s journey is her 21-year-old daughter, Malorie. “I want my daughter to be as proud of her mom as I am of her,” Catron says. “Through grace, mercy, and love, I’ve learned it’s never too late—you can decide at any age what you want to be when you grow up.”

As Catron looks ahead to graduation in May, she is preparing for her Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor II (LCDC II) Exam and obtaining her Social Work Assistant (SWA) Certificate. She also hopes to continue her education by pursuing a bachelor’s degree at Lindsey Wilson, furthering her training in human services and social work.

Through her story, Catron hopes to honor the educators who have walked alongside her, from early encouragers like Charlie Gorman and Mike Jones to her current instructor,

Patricia Beach. “Great teachers can truly change lives,” she adds. “I found that at Southern State Community College.”

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