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Celebrating students in non-traditional career paths

People who choose careers based on their interests, skills, and abilities, rather than based on gender stereotypes, experience greater rewards and job satisfaction. At North Georgia Technical College, students are standing out from the crowd and stepping outside of their comfort zone by enrolling in programs of study in which less than 25% of their gender is represented.

“You are all doing something that I have never done,” said NGTC President Dr. Gail Thaxton. “I have never stepped out of my comfort zone, but you all have. You may not realize what a huge step up and step out you have taken, but I want you to know that we are aware of the challenges you face. You are all trailblazers, helping to break down the barriers of misconceptions about career choices. You should be very proud of your accomplishments.”

Ashley Jordan always wanted to be a teacher. Upon graduation from high school, she immediately enrolled at Piedmont College and received her bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education. However, after taking an interim job at her father’s machining business, her path was forever changed. “To stay in the family business, I needed a technical education,” she said. She took both Machine Tool and CNC classes at North Georgia Technical College and graduated last spring. “It was a challenge from day one. I am a woman in a man’s field. It is dirty, and I’m a girly-girl. While at North Georgia Tech I overcame so many fears. I encourage you all to continue because you’ll be very proud that you stuck it out and graduated.”

Lesa Byrd of Blairsville has built her non-traditional career through several training opportunities at North Georgia Tech. Thirty-one years ago, she received a diploma in Data Processing. While working for Community and Southern Bank for the last twenty-two years, she returned and graduated with an associate degree in Applied Business Technology. “One of the proudest moments in my life was at graduation,” she said. “I am a wife, a mother, and a fulltime-employee, and I did it. Encourage those in your family because you will help them change their lives for the better.”

April Crocker of Toccoa didn’t think twice about pursuing a career in the emergency medical services field. As a volunteer firefighter, she had difficulty coordinating her schedule to enroll in the first responder courses offered. Undaunted from her goals, she enrolled in the Emergency Medical Technology program at North Georgia Tech and later returned for the Paramedicine Program and graduated in 2009. “Everyone at the
college made me feel so comfortable, especially Charles Hill, the instructor,” she said. April is now a Critical Care Paramedic with Stephens County. “Our crew goes out regularly to talk to elementary, middle and high schools. Every time we go, there will be a group of girls that come up to me afterward and say they didn’t know girls could do what I do. Being a girl, you bring special skills and abilities to this profession, and young people need to know that.”

For the non-traditional students who are graduating from their program of study and participating in the June commencement ceremony, Dr. Thaxton presented a special medallion recognizing them with the EDGE Award – Educationally Distinct Graduate of Excellence.

For more information on non-traditional programs of study at North Georgia Technical College, contact Kay Morgan, kmorgan@northgatech.edu, 706-754-7828.

Picture: Ashley Jordan addresses a group of non-traditional students.

Picture: Criminal Justice Student Chanel Hilliard is presented with an EDGE Award by Blairsville Campus Operations Manager Renee Deibert

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