

News Release
Martin Community College – May 10, 2017



Pictured above are the twelve students who participated in MCC's annual GED® (High School Equivalency) graduation ceremony on May 9 in the MCC auditorium. Receiving their GED® diploma from right to left on the back row are Brandon Martinez, Anthony Ford, Joseph Chavez, Jonathan Williamson, Charles McEachern and Jamal Brown and from left to right on the front row are Kelli Williams, Rhonisha Best, Jordan Haislip, Jessica Hoggard, Emiline Baker and Tabitha Cardinal. They were among 53 GED® graduates receiving their credential from MCC during the current academic year. Brown, Chavez, Martinez, McEachern, Williams and Williamson are from Williamston. Best and Haislip are from Oak City. Baker resides in Hamilton and Cardinal from Jamesville. Bertie County residents include Ford from Windsor and Hoggard from Colerain.

MCC Conducts 41st GED® Graduation

Martin Community College (MCC) celebrated its forty first GED® graduation on May 9, in a ceremony held for a nearly full audience in the MCC Auditorium. Family, friends, staff and faculty were on hand to cheer on the graduates and congratulate them on their achievement. MCC's GED® program is administered through the Basic Skills department in the Division of Continuing Education.

The graduates who chose to participate in the ceremony were; Emiline Baker, Rhonisha Best, Jamal Brown, Tabitha Cardinal, Joseph Chavez, Anthony Ford, Jordan Haislip, Jessica Hoggard, Brandon Martinez, Charles McEachern, Kelli Williams and Jonathan Williamson.

Not all of the 53 GED® graduates from MCC were able to attend the ceremony. Many of the graduates have obtained jobs or moved away since their successful completion of the program. Twenty-eight of the GED® graduates completed their course work and tests at the Bertie Correctional Institution (BCI) in Windsor.

This year, the ceremony was different. Rather than listening to the comments of a traditional commencement speaker, the audience was treated to testimonials from six of the actual students and a past graduate of the program. Jordan Haislip, Anthony Ford, Jamal Brown, Brandon Martinez, Charles McEachern and Emiline Baker were the students who spoke. They thanked family members for their love and support as well as the staff and faculty of MCC. Baker, summed up the student comments by saying, "It took me a long time to find my self-worth, but I did it. The word 'can't' isn't in my vocabulary anymore!"

The final testimonial was given by Clinton Jackson, who graduated from the program ten years ago. He noted that after he earned his GED®, he returned to MCC, earned a Medical Assisting degree and went to work in a doctor's office and later, in a nursing home. This fall, Jackson is preparing to start the surgery assistant program in Edgecombe County. He stated, "MCC is a great school. I never thought that I would be working in a doctor's office while I was in the GED® program."

Charlotte Griffin, President of the MCC Foundation board, then announced the recipients of the Foundation scholarships for GED® graduates. Jamal Brown, Jordan Haislip and Jessica Hoggard were each awarded a \$500 scholarship. These scholarships were awarded based on essays written by the candidates and will assist them with their tuition and books as they become college students this fall. The Foundation also provided each of the other graduates with free tuition for two curriculum classes in the upcoming academic year.

Brown, a lifelong resident of Williamston noted in his essay, "I give Mr. Joe (Phipps) most of the credit (for this accomplishment). He really pushed me and told me many times that I was too smart to waste my intelligence....He pushed me every day and reminded me to never lose hope or give up. Now, I want to return to MCC because I feel like Martin is a great school with awesome teachers who make it their goal to see their students succeed." Brown is planning to enter the Automotive Systems Technology (AST) program this fall and someday, open his own repair shop.

Oak City resident Haislip, stated, "I want my daughter Madisyn (now 2 months old) to see that no matter what life throws at you, as long as you believe in yourself and perform to your full potential, nothing is impossible. I want to inspire her to do great things and not go through the struggles and hardships in life that I have encountered." Haislip plans to enter MCC's Dental Assisting Program this fall and eventually becoming a pediatric dentist.

Hoggard, who lives in Colerain, wrote, "Now that I have finished this wonderful, amazing program, I want to begin college. I want to make something of myself, for my son and my boyfriend so that we can build a life together and be a family. I plan to stay at Martin because the staff is wonderful and very helpful and the programs are outstanding." Hoggard will take general education classes at MCC this fall and eventually enter the Business Administration program so that she will have the skills to manage her boyfriend's automotive shop, which he plans to open after graduating from MCC's AST program.

The GED® was born of the US Military in 1942, when they asked the American Council on Education to develop a battery of tests to measure high school-level academic skills. These tests gave military personnel and veterans who had enrolled in the military before completing high school a way to demonstrate their knowledge. Passing these tests gave returning soldiers and sailors the academic credentials they needed to get civilian jobs and gain access to post-secondary education or training.

Over time the GED® has undergone major changes. In 1988, the test added essay writing and placed more emphasis on socially relevant topics and problem-solving skills. In 2002, the test was re-formatted to comply with more recent standards for high-school education. Most recently, in January of 2014, the GED® was moved to Pearson VUE, a proprietary computer-based testing platform. The current GED® test covers the following areas: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies.

According to Jeri Griffin, the Basic Skills Director at MCC, "The recent changes to the GED® have made it unattainable for many students. The GED® testing fee has increased from \$35.00 to \$80.00 (\$20 per discipline), plus there is now an additional \$24.00 practice test fee (\$6 per each discipline) which was previously free. Today, it costs \$104 to take the entire battery of tests. Most of our students do not have the money to take the test. Thank goodness for occasional donors, and the College sanctioned Yard Sale we held last October. The yard sale raised enough money to cover this year's student test fees. However, these funds are depleting fast. I hope that more angels step forward to help our students. As witnessed at our graduation ceremony here tonight, a gift as small as \$100 can change a life."

GED® credentials are very important. People with a high school credential earn roughly \$568,000 more during their lifetime than those without. MCC offers

GED® classes in Williamston, Windsor and Robersonville. For more information on the GED® program at MCC, call 252-789-0288 or email Jeri Griffin at jeri.griffin@martincc.edu. To make a tax deductible donation for scholarships or GED® test fees, contact, Robert Bonner at 252-789-0295 or robert.bonner@martincc.edu.

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