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'It's been awesome': WKU-O graduates 30

By Freddie Bourne Messenger-Inquirer
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Western Kentucky University-Owensboro computer information technology graduate Scott Johnson, left, talks with his father, Todd Johnson, with fiancée Autumn Waggoner, on Tuesday as they enter the Humanities Building at Owensboro Community & Technical College for WKU-O's graduation ceremony.

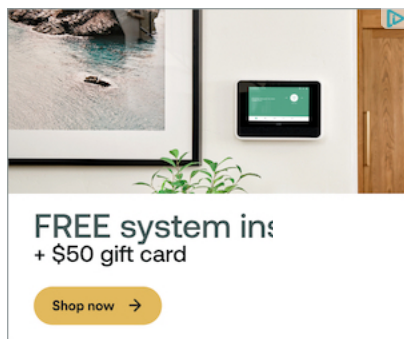
Photo by Greg Eans, Messenger-Inquirer | geans@messenger-inquirer.com

Friends and family members filled the Donald J. Blandford Lecture Hall inside the Humanities Building on Owensboro Technical & Community College's campus Tuesday to celebrate the accomplishments of Western Kentucky University-Owensboro's 30-student graduating class.

For some students, like graduation student speaker Patty Sheaffer, it's the completion of a long journey of going to school "since 1993."

"I've been a hairdresser for 57 years," Sheaffer, 75, said. "(When) I had decided to go back and study psychology, I really didn't even expect to get a degree. That was not my goal — but here I am, and I have my degree, and I'm very proud of it."

While Sheaffer, who earned her bachelor of science in psychology and a minor in history, said she does not have plans to use her degree for another career, she still is looking to keep the knowledge flowing.



“I went back to school mainly because I just got really interested in all the things that you can learn that I did not know. ... I just wanted to know more. I wanted to learn; and at my age, you’re never too old to learn ...,” she said, “and I’m not finished. I’m going to continue.

“... If you read books or anything ..., you’re gonna learn. Just don’t quit.”

For Scott Johnson, he was appreciative WKU-O has been there throughout his journey to his bachelor’s degree in computer information technology.

“(The school) has done a lot for me,” Johnson, 23, said. “It’s been one H-E-double-hockey-sticks of a ride, but it has been awesome.”

Johnson plans to get his Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification over the summer to help him secure a job in the IT field and maybe start looking beyond the Commonwealth.

“Luckily, IT is a very flexible field, so hopefully I’ll be able to get a job somewhere,” Johnson said. “Not that I don’t love Kentucky — the houses here are pretty cheap — but I do want to explore a little bit.”

Heather Sewell used her time at WKU-O to find another career path, securing her degree in social work after realizing her initial plan of becoming a nurse “kind of shifted.”

“... I just had a friend that was doing social work, and we talked a lot, and that’s what kind of made me switch my degree,” Sewell, 30, said. “It’s definitely (about) helping others. When I was doing nursing, I wanted to help others; so I figured another way to do it was through being a social worker.”

The road was “challenging,” as Sewell said she’s a single mother with three children. But the support she received throughout her time enrolled made it “doable.”

She will begin her master’s degree program for social work in August at the University of Kentucky and recently accepted a job with the Department for Community Based Services in Crittenden County.

For Sewell, her time at WKU-O has been something she can look back fondly on.

"It's been awesome," she said.



An orange banner advertisement for Adobe Creative Cloud. On the left is the Adobe logo (a red 'A' with the word 'Adobe' below it). To the right of the logo is the text 'Visualize it all with Creative Cloud All Apps.' in white. Further right is a white button with rounded corners containing the text 'Buy now' in black. On the far right edge of the banner, a small portion of a laptop screen is visible, showing a dark interface with some white text.

