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CF Jack Wilkinson Levy County Campus conducts first GED graduation



All but three of the Fall Class of 2017 CF GED graduates are seen moments before the ceremony.

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LEVY COUNTY – Twenty-two people earned the privilege to walk through the line and accept their General Equivalent Diploma (GED) on Thursday evening (Jan. 17) in a commencement exercise at the College of Central Florida (CF) Jack Wilkinson Levy County Campus.

This was an historic moment because it was the first set of GED graduates to complete the program at this brand new campus. Previously, these graduates would accept their diplomas at the Tommy Usher Community Center.

CF Jack Wilkinson Levy County Campus Manager of Instructional Services Holly McGlashan opens the program on Thursday night.

Before the ceremony started, CF Levy Campus Manager of Instructional Services Holly McGlashan shared her feelings about the adult education program at CF.

“We transform lives,” McGlashan said. “Nothing says this more than the GED program. We open doors that would not be open before for



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our graduates. What we do in adult education is life-changing.”

CF Levy Campus Manager of Instructional Services McGlashan provided the introductions of staff members at the ceremony.

CF Adult Education Instructor Richard Anderson led the packed room in the *Pledge of Allegiance*. This ceremony was conducted in the Dr. and Mrs. Jack Mann Conference Center.

The "Mrs." of the title of the conference center is Loy Ann Meeks Mann.

The Manns were among the first of many significant contributors who led to the campus being completed in Levy County. Jack Mann passed away at the age of 75 on July 11, 2013, in what used to be the Haven Hospice Care Center in Chiefland.

That care center closed recently, but Haven Hospice still provides its services at homes in the area.

Loy Ann still resides in the area.

Earlier in 2013, in January of that year, a man who would mark his 76th birthday that month graduated with his GED from CF at the Tommy Usher Community Center.

Like the event on Dec. 7, 2017, the Thursday evening event on Jan. 17, 2013, was a commencement exercise.

Fred Oliver of Chiefland never went past the eighth grade, he said, and that was back in 1953.

“When my wife developed Alzheimer's three years ago, and had to be placed in a nursing facility, I decided to spend my alone time wisely,” Oliver said. “In January of 2012, I enrolled at the Chiefland campus (of the College of Central Florida), and passed all my tests by November. I was also awarded a grant to attend the CF Levy Welding Technology class also in the Chiefland area to become a certified welder.”

Oliver was one of the 23 graduates walking through the line on that Thursday evening four years ago.

The most recent CF GED exercise, however, was the very first at the new campus.



CF Enrollment/Student Services Coordinator Leah Gamble introduces Krystle Skelly. Sitting to the left in the photo is Christine Dunn.

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CF College Educational Advisor Krystle Skelly congratulates the graduates on their accomplishment.

<https://youtu.be/OJYVUdCxdDc>

In this video, part of the presentation by Krystle Skelly is captured.

CF Enrollment/Student Services Coordinator Leah Gamble introduced Krystle Skelly – college credit advisor, the keynote speaker of the night.

Skelly was previously more involved in the adult education program at CF and she said she misses the interactions she had with previous students who earned their GED at CF.

While each graduate will walk away from the night with their own perspectives, she said, each graduate can share in having pride in accomplishing this goal.

All of the GED recipients that night share a common accomplishment with Mary Lou Retton Kelley.

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Better known by her maiden name, Retton is a retired American gymnast. At the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, she earned a gold medal in the individual all-around competition, as well as two silver medals and two bronze medals.

Other people who earned GEDs that were mentioned by Skelly were Oscar De La Hoya, a former professional boxer who competed from 1992 to 2008; Frances Ann "Fran" Lebowitz, an American author; the late David Robert Jones, known professionally as David Bowie, an English singer, songwriter and actor; Curtis James Jackson III, known professionally as 50 Cent, an American rapper; Mark Robert Michael Wahlberg, an American actor; and TV Judge Greg Mathis.

These famous individuals and many other successful men and women earned their high school diplomas via the same method as Thursday night's graduates, she said.

"These individuals overcame poverty, personal barriers and situational struggles in order to earn their diploma," Skelly said. "They did this, and they went after their goals with perseverance and did not give up until they achieved what they wanted."

By putting in hard work, that night's graduates had reached this goal.

Skelly mentioned that in her years of watching the GED graduation ceremonies, she has seen people from all walks of life accomplish this goal. She even mentioned seeing Mr. Oliver accept his diploma back in 2013.

Another recipient she mentioned was a young man who had undergone so much chemotherapy as well as an operation that he needed assistance to graduate with his classmates.

She has watched single mothers who were dealing with work while earning their diplomas, and two of them are currently enrolled in college and are doing well.

Another student Skelly spoke about had a one-hour commute one-way to attend classes in the welding program, and he completed the program to earn certification in welding.

As the attendees accepted their diplomas, they were recognized by a line of people – Enrollment/Student Services Coordinator Gamble, Adult Education Instructor Will Rucker and Adult Education Instructor Anderson.

Christine Dunn directed the students to turn their tassels.

"I would like to extend a special thank you, to the wonderful faculty and staff of the CF Levy Campus," Gamble said in her closing remarks, "to our graduates who give us a reason to celebrate, and to our graduation speaker tonight, Krystle Skelly. Graduates ~ I would like to encourage you to make the most of everyday and your future can be bright. Congratulations and let us know if we can help you as you continue your journey. Thank you all for coming out and sharing in this celebration with us."

The Fall 2017 National Adult Education Honor Society Graduates were Danielle Gabaldon, Esther Judson and Charles P. Plateroti. The other 18 members of the CF GED Fall Class of 2017 were Michael Barbieri, Pristina Birchfield, Mark Boivin, Timothy "Will" Childers, Wendy Collins, Mayra Cruz, Delsin "Izzy" DeJarnette, Cody Field, D'artagnan Harrelson, Thomas "Tommy" Luczak, Tricia Norman, Carol "Shelby" Ozard, Charles R. "Charlie" Plateroti, Austen Reynolds, Angellica Rottman, Cody Sedwick, Douglas Simpson, Zachary Steck and Justin Whitehead.

There were cookies and punch for refreshments, and photo opportunities provided after the ceremony.