

# 'Dedicated to My Late Grandmother!'

by David C. Butty



Patricia A. Coleman is fulfilling her promise by "dedicating her degree to her grandmother, Mrs. Marie Coleman.

Patricia's academic journey at Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) began in 2007 with some challenges forcing her to quit. She quit the quest for her degree, but ended up with a certificate as a Medical Assistant. She vowed to continue to work hard for her degree. "I started the process of appeal in January 2021 and started back with a plan of work in August of 2021," she said.

In these last two years I've met so many beautiful people but my fondest memories are those educators that pushed and encouraged me to keep moving forward," said Patricia, who will be receiving an Associates in Science degree when she walks across the stage on June 3rd, during the District's 53rd graduation ceremonies at Ford Field in Detroit. The program will begin at 11:00 am. The keynote address will be given by Michigan Secretary of State, the Honorable Jocelyn Benson. This will be the District's first in-person graduation since the pandemic.

Brian Singleton, Vice Chancellor for Student Services, and President

for the Curtis L. Ivery Downtown Campus, said the District has developed partnerships with K-12 schools to ensure high school students have an opportunity to be dual enrolled and gain college credit while still in high school.

"Each year WCCCD graduates high school students with their associate's degree days before they actually receive their high school diploma. Many students walk away with college certificates or enough credits to transfer into the 4 year lessening the financial burden they will have. For decades, the District has maintained these post-secondary partnerships," he said.

Patricia's only regret is that her grandmother will not be there to cheer for her on her success. "Grandma showed me by example that it doesn't matter when or how long it takes to get it done, chip away at it and get it done. My grandmother's health visibly started to decline in 2021 (may have been sooner but this is when I saw it). I promised her one day while talking in her ear that I was going back to school and this time I will finish."

Patricia said the promise she made to her grandmother to complete her studies came with

obstacles. "The very first obstacle I had to overcome was mental, pushing through the grieving of my grandmother's passing. She passed away about two weeks prior to me starting school and I really wanted her to see me graduate. Then there was the obstacle of understanding she isn't here and refocusing. There were many other obstacles I had to overcome because I had not been in a school setting like this in a while, working full time, running a business and being a single mom," she said.

"This graduation means a lot to me! It's a milestone proving that I can do this for myself. My main motivation were my daughter and keeping my word! I needed this graduation for my daughter, grandma, and myself. There were a lot of tears! My family and extended family played a tremendous role in the success of graduation with helping explain to my daughter how important it is for mommy to study and do homework. They reminded me how important it was to take time for myself and whenever they saw me doubting, gave me encouraging words," she added.

Patricia said her "most enjoyable time is spent with my daughter, watching movies and eating. She's

my little buddy! But above all, I just want to say, this degree is dedicated to Mrs. Marie Coleman (my grandmother)!"

Patricia's certificate achievement towards completion of an Associate's degree is a representation of the dedication and perseverance demonstrated by our WCCCD graduates. Many students begin their career pathways towards completion of an Associate's degree and achieve the intermediate milestone of an industry-recognized certificate to advance employment. Stackable certificates are awarded to maintain momentum for achieving their degree, while providing an avenue to meet their family and employment needs.

As for Patricia, her educational journey will not end with graduation. "The next step is the nursing program. This degree is a mile stone achievement, as it reminds me that I am able to achieve even the goals that I thought were hardest. My plan is to start at RN and continue to learn until I get my MSN. I plan to be a nurse practitioner that is caring, careful and attentive," Patricia concluded.



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