

News Release

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May 7, 2013

Graduates celebrate accomplishments with families – near and far

KOKOMO, Ind. — When Victoria Johnson crossed the stage at Indiana University Kokomo’s Commencement Tuesday (May 7), her husband was nearly 3,000 miles away, deployed to Honduras with the U.S. Army.

He didn’t miss this important day in her life, however, as the campus provided a live webcast of Commencement for the first time ever.

“We were so excited that he could watch me graduate,” she said. “He took the whole day off so he could catch it on his computer. Even though he’s far away, he’s supported me the whole way through nursing school.”

Johnson, from Kokomo, also celebrated with family, including her parents, her husband’s parents, and her two children, Khalon, 3, and Kensley, 2, saying they’ve all been instrumental to her success, especially since she completed most of her college while Arek Johnson has been serving in the military.

“There’s been a lot of love surrounding us, and a lot of support and help when I’ve needed it,” she said. “My kids have inspired me. They never run out of hugs.”

Proud family members surrounded the graduates, cheering when their names were read and snapping pictures throughout the ceremony.

Jessica Beck credited her daughter, Allison, for her participation in the ceremony. She earned a bachelor’s degree in education.

“I wasn’t going to walk at Commencement, and she was beside herself that I wouldn’t celebrate all my success,” Beck said, with a laugh. “I’m here for her.”

Beck, Sharpsville, hopes she’s shown Allison, 18, and younger daughter Kati, 7, the value of persisting to reach a goal.

“This was a long journey, but it was worth it,” she said.

Don Sedberry also completed a long journey to his college degree. He was one of the first students in the new media communication program when it started in 2002.

“It’s been a long time coming, between work and medical issues,” he said. “I’ve really enjoyed it, and enjoyed working with the amazing faculty.” Sedberry, who lives in Indianapolis, plans to work for a year or two, and then earn a master’s degree and a Ph.D., so he can teach at the college level.

Sherese Williams also plans to continue her education, after graduating with her bachelor’s degree in nursing. She previously received an associate degree, and worked 13 years before returning to school. Now, she wants to earn a master’s degree and become a nurse practitioner.

“With all the changes in health care, education is more important than ever for a nurse,” the Indianapolis resident said. “The more you know, the more you can advance in the field. I am excited for the opportunities my degree offers me.”

Joe Sullivan, Kokomo, hopes his criminal justice degree will help him advance in his career at the Howard County Sheriff Department. He currently works as a corrections officer, with the goal of becoming a deputy.

“This gives me the knowledge I’m going to need when I start going on the road,” he said.

Jacob Faust had the distinction of being IU Kokomo’s first student athlete to graduate. The Galveston resident earned his degree in business and played on the basketball team.

“I’m excited to finally be done,” he said, adding that the best part of his experience was working with the faculty and staff. “They answer all the questions you have, and are happy to assist you in any way you need.”

Joshua Holda, from Flora, graduated a year early with his bachelor’s degree in chemical biology, thanks to an agreement between the campus and Logan College of Chiropractic. He is already enrolled in the chiropractic program, and said he is succeeding in his classes.

“The School of Sciences really prepared me properly for the classes in graduate school,” Holda said. “I appreciated the small class sizes and the outstanding faculty at IU Kokomo. They know the students, and they care about the students.”

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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