

KnowHow2GOKy

Student Contacts Available for Interviews

These students represent the target audiences of the KnowHow2GOKy outreach initiative. They are available for interviews upon request and can provide unique perspectives on the education needs and experiences of the audiences they represent.

GED opens doors, changes generations



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Anthony Smith of Louisville grew up in a single parent home and dropped out of high school. After earning his GED, he enrolled at Jefferson Community and Technical College. Anthony later transferred to Northern Kentucky University and became the first in his family to earn a bachelor's degree. He worked his way through college while supporting himself, his wife, and their two young sons. In all, it took him seven years to earn his bachelor's of arts degree in political science with a minor in legal studies. After graduation, he chose to come back to Louisville to raise his family and has chosen a career in which he works with our most important natural resource—our youth. Anthony's experience and background has been extremely valuable in his work as the lead organizer for Making Connections in Louisville. In this role, Anthony works to connect residents and agencies in four Louisville neighborhoods to resources related to job training, early childhood and asset building. Anthony and his wife Devoyna have been married for 10 years and have three sons ages 20, 18, and 10. As proof of the generational impact postsecondary education can have, Anthony's eldest son is a sophomore at Western Kentucky University, and the 18-year-old just completed his 1st year at WKU with his brother.

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Beating the odds- Mom of two earns degree online, receives promotion

Lauri Bodenbender graduated high school a single mom of two. Over the next 10 years, she took classes toward earning her associate's degree at various Kentucky community and technical colleges. In the early stages of her college career, she was only able to take one or two classes per semester. However in 2002 she discovered online classes through Kentucky Virtual Campus. This enabled her to take more classes each semester, and helped her reach her goal of earning an associate's degree from Bluegrass Community and Technical College in 2005. When her dream job opened up, she didn't have the degree required to apply, which encouraged her to continue on to get her bachelor's degree. She transferred into Northern Kentucky University's online organizational leadership program and earned her bachelor's of arts degree in May 2007. She found the online program a convenient way to complete her degree while caring for her family and working full-time at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. After getting her bachelor's degree, Lauri received a promotion to a higher position at BCTC. She then began the master's program in executive leadership and organizational change at NKU in fall 2007 and recently took a position as a survey administration analyst with a private corporation in Louisville.

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Navy vet and mom of two transfers to study geography



Maria Church, of Georgetown, is a mother of two, a navy veteran and a graduate of Bluegrass Community and Technical College. Maria graduated BCTC in May 2007 with her associate of arts and associate of science degrees, earning a cumulative 4.0 grade point average. While at BCTC, she served as president of the Alpha Phi Kappa Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, BCTC's international honor society, and volunteered for the Hispanic Outreach program, the Peace & Justice Coalition, Fayette County Relay for Life, God's Pantry food drives, and was classroom volunteer at Anne Mason

Elementary. In 2007, Maria was named Kentucky's New Century Scholar and received a \$2,000 scholarship and special recognition by representing the Commonwealth in the opening ceremonies at the American Association of Community Colleges Convention in Tampa, Fla. After graduation, she successfully transferred to Eastern Kentucky University to pursue her bachelor's degree in geography, where she is currently enrolled in the Honors Program and beginning this fall, will be receiving a full-tuition scholarship through the College of Arts and Science. In addition to attending school full-time and caring for her family, Maria works part-time in the ECU geography department. "While I do place a great deal of importance on my personal educational goals, my first priority is to prepare my children for their own futures," says Maria.

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Education without borders- student earns degree in Kentucky from across the globe



After a brief stint at the Virginia Military Institute in 2000, Sebastian Coe had all but abandoned any hope of furthering his college education. Though he had attended VMI for a year, he lost motivation to continue, instead working as a low-level manager in a food services company. In 2006, Sebastian learned about the Kentucky Virtual Campus and decided to go back to school online. A year later, he transferred to the telecommunications systems management online program at Murray State University. After a semester in the program, he applied and was chosen to represent Murray State in China as an English instructor, where he remains today. While living in China, he continued to take online courses, and eventually was able to accumulate the credits to earn his degree. His goal is to continue learning online and eventually earn a master's degree. "Online learning is such an excellent way to give an entire new generation of students the skills they need to confront the challenges of the modern world. It allows students that cannot attend traditional classes, like me, to further themselves both intellectually and as human beings."

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GEAR UP student pursuing dream of teaching college math

Photo available soon

Ever since he was young, Josh Sparks wanted to teach. He knew to achieve this dream, he had to go to college. Born in New Boston, Michigan, Josh moved to Fanny Hook, Ky, his freshman year of high school. That year, his new school- Elliott County High School- was chosen to participate in the GEAR UP Kentucky program. Through GEAR UP, Josh participated in summer camps at Eastern Kentucky University, learning about the steps it took to plan, pay for and succeed in college. Because his parents had told him early on he would need to pay for his own college education, he began to prepare early. "I saw how my parents struggled without their degrees," says Josh "When I was getting ready to leave for college, we were just getting to working class. On my FAFSA my freshman year, our family income was \$11,000." From what he learned in GEAR UP, Josh knew that getting involved in extracurricular activities would increase

his chances to get a scholarship, so he got busy. He participated in his school's academic team, chess team, French club, baseball team, yearbook team, Future Educators of America group, student government association and BETA Club Council. Despite his busy schedule and the financial challenges his family faced, Josh was very successful in high school and graduated in 2006 with a 3.96 grade point average. After graduation, Josh enrolled at Eastern Kentucky University. His efforts in high school paid off, earning him an ECU Excellence Scholarship, which paid his tuition, housing and meals in full. Through his participation in Upward Bound, dual credit courses, and various other programs, he entered ECU with 24 college credit hours. Josh is now in his senior year at ECU, pursuing a bachelor's degree with a double major in math and sociology and a minor in statistics. He is an active member of the campus community at ECU and works part-time as a lab assistant in the math department. He plans to earn his Ph.D. and teach college math at a Kentucky college or university. This summer, Josh is serving as a budget analyst intern at the Department of Treasury in Washington D.C. To help others follow in his footsteps, Josh participates as a GEAR UP e-mentor at ECU. As a mentor, he corresponds online with 7th and 8th graders at neighboring schools offering advice about how to prepare for and succeed in college. "If you want to go (to college), there are plenty of ways to make it possible," says Josh. It's not about intelligence or talent, it's about persistence and desire. As long as you prepare in high school and do the work, you'll succeed."

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70 year-old fulfills dream of getting a college degree

Photo opportunity available at May 29 launch event

When the Korean War began, Howard Dickey, of Versailles, left the University of Kentucky to serve in the Air Force in Korea. Upon returning to Kentucky this disabled veteran had to immediately start a job to support his family, and never had the opportunity to finish college. Earlier this spring, Dickey heard about Project Graduate, a Council on Postsecondary Education initiative that encourages Kentuckians who never finished college to go back and earn their degrees. When Dickey connected with the UK Project Graduate team, he was surprised to discover he had indeed earned enough credits to graduate. This month, the 70-year-old sat among age 20-something students as he finally received his bachelor's degree in political science.