



LeRoy Collins Distinguished Alumni Awards AGAINST THE ODDS, 2017



Tangie Archer

As a single mother of five living below the poverty line, domestic abuse survivor Tangie Archer knew she needed a college degree if she stood any chance of rising above her circumstances and securing the work she deeply desired to do -- supporting and empowering victims of domestic violence.

"I always worked, working two jobs much of the time, but I lost a lot of time with my children just to be able to survive for my children," Tangie explained. "When I received my degree from St. Johns River State College, I actually received my key to gain access to the type of work that I love to do."

However, before getting her hands on this "key" that would turn her life in a new direction, Tangie survived some unimaginable encounters of domestic abuse from her husband, who nearly took her life. Her injuries, which included half of her face cut open and half of her ear cut off, kept her out of work for a year and a half.

Tangie has traded those horrific memories, limited employment opportunities and low pay for an invaluable SJR State experience, rewarding employment and a salary greater than what she's ever received.

The first in her family to attend college, on December 15, 2016, with a solid GPA, Tangie proudly walked across the stage at SJR State and received her Associate in Arts degree. "I quickly learned that my GPA was so precious, it was so valuable, it was just like a little baby that I needed to nurture and protect," she said.

By the end of her second semester, Tangie was invited to become a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. Shocked by such an offer, she explained, "I didn't know anything about an honor society, because I didn't come from a world where I was exposed to this kind of knowledge. SJR State was a whole new and exciting world for me, filled with caring people and positive experiences all the way through -- from point one, right through to the end."

But Tangie's positive experiences didn't stop there. Thirteen days after receiving her degree, she began working as a volunteer victim advocate at the Lee Conlee House, a domestic violence shelter for women in Palatka. Within two weeks, she was hired as a part-time employee. Continuing to thank God, in advance, for her heart's desires, Tangie's part-time status soon changed to full time, and she began leading empowerment workshops for battered women. Most recently, Tangie has been promoted to court advocate with a community advocacy component added to this role.

"Without a college degree and the faculty, staff, student and community support that helped me receive my degree, I couldn't have this job at the Lee Conlee House," Tangie stated. "That's what my time at SJR State did for me. It gave me the key to reach my dream of helping other victims of domestic abuse to also rise above their circumstances."