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Georgia Southern Student Graduates at 19

May 11, 2017

You can do anything you put your mind to. A cliché to some, but a life motto for new Georgia Southern graduate Arianna Archer. Her hard work in her academic career came to fruition in May when she received her Bachelor of Science in public health at age 19.

The Cuthbert, Georgia, native began her college career when she was just 17-years-old after excelling in gifted and accelerated classes throughout her elementary, middle and high school years. “My academic career has been a bit weird,” she said. Archer’s mother experienced numerous pregnancy and birthing complications, leading many doctors to believe Archer would be developmentally delayed.

“Then, when I was 5, my father was murdered, and it became a cold case,” she said. “We moved away from that town, and when I went to a new school, the teachers realized that I was academically ahead of the students in my class, so I began taking gifted classes.”

Archer continued on her gifted academic career, and once she was in high school she dual enrolled at Andrew College in Cuthbert. She took college classes in the morning and high school classes in the afternoon, racking up 18 college credits she brought with her to Georgia Southern. “The workload wasn’t really hard,” Archer said. “The challenges were more social adjustments. I had friends and things like that, but when I came to college, all my friends could go and do stuff that I couldn’t. It bothered me at first when I was younger, but now I just accept it.”

Despite her challenges, Archer found a home in the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health (JPHCOPH), referring to the college as a “small family.” Although she began her academic career at Georgia Southern as a nursing major, she quickly realized she enjoyed public health more and switched her major to health promotion and education. “Once I started taking the science classes like chemistry and anatomy, I realized I didn’t like the hands-on side of health care,” she said. “So I changed my major to public health and fell in love with it.”

Archer has applied for the Master of Healthcare Administration program at Georgia Southern, and hopes to complete her second degree here to become a Double Eagle. Eventually, she plans to go into hospital management, working her way up to being a hospital CEO. “Public health is a way to help people that isn’t the ideal route for health care,” she said. “But it helps people in ways that others may not understand. As a health care administrator, you have the ability to put in place policies that could help thousands rather than just one.”

Receiving her bachelor’s degree is still a bit surreal for Archer, who said keeping her goals at the forefront of her mind has been a driving force in her educational career. “My thing is I tried to live life without regrets, and when mistakes happen, I try not to dwell on them or let them get me down. I use them as a building block or a lesson. I stay determined no matter what challenges I come across.”

And Archer has the same advice for others who are pursuing their dreams. “Do what you want to do. I’ve had a lot of people tell me I couldn’t do things, that I wasn’t old enough or ready or mature,” she said. “But do what you want to do. Make sure your mindset is where it needs to be, make sure you stay focused, and you can do anything you put your mind to.”