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# Three Rivers Celebrates Class of 2017 at Commencement Ceremony

MAY 30TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - Three Rivers College filled the Black River Coliseum to celebrate the institution's newest graduating class on Friday, May 19. Approximately 590 students in Three Rivers' degree and certificate programs were eligible to walk across the stage during Friday's ceremony.

Stan Berry, a Three Rivers alumnus, Army veteran, and editor at the Daily American Republic in Poplar Bluff, gave the keynote address to the Class of 2017. In his speech, Berry spoke to the necessity of strength and determination in life, a lesson that he credited to his mother.

"She'd send us trooping off to school with a warm breakfast in our bellies, and then she'd go to the garment factory to spend eight hours doing piecework on a sewing machine," said Berry. "I don't know where she got the strength."

Eric Schalk, Chair of the Three Rivers College Board of Trustees, and Dr. Wesley Payne, President of Three Rivers College, also spoke at the event. The Three Rivers College Choir, directed by Sherry Mitchell, performed an arrangement of "In My Life" by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

"Education is the key to better lives for students, for their families, and for the communities from which they come," said Schalk. "Remember: you are the future, and it

looks to be a bright one.”

The college honored several outstanding graduates at the ceremony, and recognized its many first-generation, non-traditional, veteran, and multi-generation graduates. Among the individual graduates spotlighted were:

- Misty-Love Lopez, a New York City native and first-generation graduate, who has been deeply involved in campus life at Three Rivers, including serving as an Academic Coach in the ACHIEVE program and President of the Student Government Association.
- Yvone White, a non-traditional student who enrolled at Three Rivers at the age of 72, over 60 years after dropping out of school in eighth grade to help support his family.
- The Coleman and Heaton families, a set of multi-generation graduates. Shelby Coleman; her husband, Cody; her brothers, Casey Heaton and Michael Heaton; and her sister-in-law, Rhonda Heaton, all graduated this year with degrees in Education.
- Robert Wake, a veteran graduate and Purple Heart recipient who came to Three Rivers after overcoming a traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. Wake is a member of the Phi Theta Kappa academic honor society, served as President of the Student Veterans Association, and received the Mo-Kan-Ne TRiO Achiever award for his participation in Three Rivers’ ACHIEVE program.

This year marks the 49th anniversary of the college’s first commencement ceremony since its founding in 1966. Since then, Three Rivers has served over 100,000 students from its degree, transfer, and career-technical programs. Registration is currently open for Fall classes at Three Rivers. To learn more about registering for classes at Three Rivers, call the Welcome Center at 573-840-9605 or visit [trcc.edu](http://trcc.edu).

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