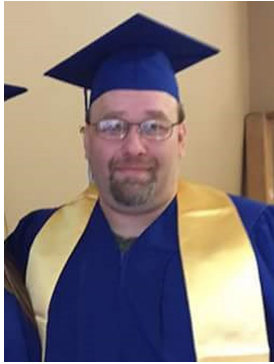


# YTI graduate: From homeless to success



Alyssa Jackson, 505-5438/@AlyssaJacksonYD 1:32 p.m. EDT May 27, 2016



(Photo: submitted)

At 42 years old, Fred Padgett isn't your typical college student.

He dropped out of high school at 16 to get his GED. On Wednesday, though, he experienced his first graduation during the YTI Career Institute's commencement ceremony.

Padgett graduated from the medical assistant program with the President's Award, which recognizes exemplary students who have overcome hardship during their education. Students must be nominated by faculty, and then program directors review the nomination letters. An interview is done with nominees before the final winner is selected. Each program at YTI Career Institute recognizes one student.

Padgett's college career was certainly not without hardship. Several years ago, when he was an EMT, he decided to pursue a different career path in healthcare. He had always wanted to be a nurse, and felt that graduating from YTI Career Institute in the medical assistant program would be a step in the right direction.

Being a father of three and going back to college is difficult enough for any adult student. These struggles were compounded with the fact that Padgett's wife is a stay-at-home mother due to medical reasons. With Padgett focusing on school, the family quickly experienced financial trouble and was homeless for several months.

"We stayed in a shelter for a few months, and during that time I just kept going to school," Padgett said. "I had to finish. There's been times where I wanted to give up and just walk away, but I couldn't look at my kids and say 'Do your best' if I didn't."

This determination did not go unnoticed by his professors, particularly his medical assisting instructor Gloria Ward, who nominated him for the President's Award. Padgett explained that Ward kept him going through the many times when he wanted to throw his hands in the air and give up.

"I just kept being his cheerleader and encouraging him," Ward said. "I felt that he worked hard at reaching his goal. To me that was exciting. I felt that he had come a long way. That's why I chose him."

Upon winning the award, Padgett was asked to give a speech at graduation. He addressed his classmates and all of the instructors who helped him and touched his life in some way. They were people he could use as examples of "what to do and how to persevere."

Two weeks ago Padgett began working at WellSpan Endocrinology in Gettysburg as a medical assistant. He explained he will continue working with them for several years before returning to school to become a registered nurse and then, ultimately, a nurse practitioner. He's hoping his job will eventually reimburse his tuition to continue his learning.

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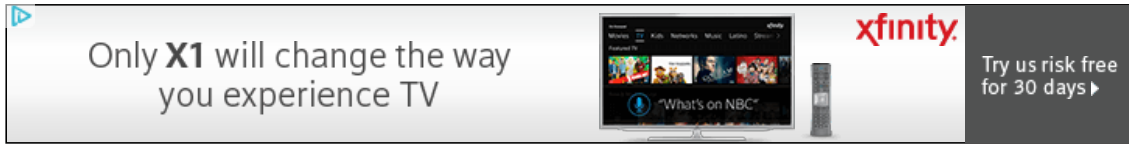
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"I'm going to work hard and make them want to see me further my career," he said.


No matter what comes in the future, Ward is betting that Padgett will have a smile on his face, much like he did during his time in the classroom. One of the reasons she enjoyed working with him in class so much was because of the encouragement he gave to his classmates.

"There were times when (the other students) were running through difficulties and he would be the listening ear and encouraging them, when sometimes he was maybe the one who needed the encouragement," Ward said. "He was cheerful no matter what, even when he was having issues or problems he was facing. He made the best of it."

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