

EOC CLIENT CONQUERS “ALL” ON ROAD TO SUCCESS



Antoinette Hudson
“EOC TRiO Achiever”

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“Motivated” is a word Antoinette Hudson uses a lot. However, the single-mother-of-four and Education Opportunity Center (EOC) client doesn’t use the word when describing herself. Hudson uses it when describing those who have guided her along her own road to success.

“I didn’t do this myself,” said Hudson, while wiping away tears of gratitude. “My success is dependent on other motivated people who have been there for me in my life. I’ve had some really good mentors, and of course my own children, who have inspired me. They’re my motivation to move beyond myself and achieve in greater ways than I ever thought I could.”

Still, nobody can argue “motivated” pretty much sums up Hudson herself. This vibrant 30-year-old woman holds a long list of accomplishments, many achieved in the face of adversity.

At age 16, Hudson was a junior at South High School in Denver. She was also a National Honor Society student, a leading SHS basketball team player with WNBA aspirations, SHS volleyball team member, enrolled in advanced placement classes... and a third-generation pregnant teenager from a broken home.

“I grew up on welfare, money was tight,” recalled Hudson. “I went from living with my mother to living with my father, and years later with my grandmother. My grandmother died and I was very close to her. And, like so many teenagers out there in similar situations, I was looking for reassurance from somebody else – you know, a boyfriend.”

Hudson said she was one of those students who loved school and was the last person anybody thought would end up as a teenage parent. But, she said terminating the pregnancy was never an option she would consider. Instead, Hudson turned a difficult situation into an inspirational one.

“I struggled all my life,” said Hudson. “I wanted a better life for my baby and for myself.”

Not wanting to go to an alternative school, Hudson acted with maturity beyond her years and graduated from high school a semester early in order to take care of her daughter. She maintained a high GPA and never missed an assignment. To this day, Hudson is remembered by SHS staff as an exceptional individual.

“I’ve never been more proud of a kid than I have been of her,” said Jamie Lofaro, SHS assistant principal and athletic director. “Things were hard for her, but she always put the team first. She always put others first. She’s a self-made woman.”

Realizing a high school diploma alone wasn’t enough to reach her goals and provide the quality of life she wanted for her baby daughter, Hudson came to the EOC for guidance.

The EOC is a non-profit program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. EOC services are free and available to residents in the six-county Denver metropolitan area who are low income and/or the first generation in their family to attend a postsecondary establishment.

EOC services include: Educational Planning Counseling; Career Exploration Counseling; Student Financial Aid Advising; and, Scholarship Search.

Following the advice of an EOC advisor and utilizing EOC services, Hudson graduated from CCD in 1998 with an Associates of General Sciences degree in Early Childhood Education, a Director's Certificate and a Group Leader Certificate. This, while raising her daughter alone with no emotional or financial support from the child's father nor his family. She lived in low-income housing and held down a work-study job.

"EOC was the stepping stone that helped me achieve my dreams and goals," said Hudson. "Having gone through EOC is one of the best things that ever happened to me."

"EOC was the stepping stone that helped me achieve my dreams and goals." - Antoinette Hudson

Others say Hudson, and people like her, are one of the best things that happen to institutions promoting education and career advancement.

"It's because of clients like Antoinette Hudson who make everyone's job here at the EOC so rewarding," said EOC Director Pat Middleton. "We strive to bridge that gap between higher education and those looking to enrich their lives. It can be daunting for anyone unfamiliar with the application and admissions process, so we're here to help connect EOC clients to their future."

Hudson continued to climb the ladder of success and enrolled at Metropolitan State College of Denver. She earned a B.A. in Speech Communication with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education, and a Teacher's License in Early Childhood Education in 2001. Hudson worked as a student teacher at Wyman Elementary School and substitute teacher at the Temple Buell/Clayton Foundation. She also married and had another child during this time.

Next, Hudson moved on to the University of Phoenix and completed her Master of Arts in Education in Administration and Supervision, along with a Type-D Principal's License this year. Moreover, she found out she was pregnant again – **only this time with twins.**

However, while Hudson's academic achievements, professional life and family grew - her marriage crumbled. Nevertheless, she completed her first masters program and is only a few classes away from earning her **second** master's degree. Her twins were born in September, 2005.

"Her perseverance is amazing," said Jill Simms, a fellow master's student with Hudson. "Here she was pregnant with twins, has two other children to take care of, working full-time, contemplating a divorce, earning two masters degrees and she didn't give up. I admire her for her strength, honesty and hard work."

Obviously, that hard work is paying off. Hudson starts a new job as a first-grade teacher with the Cherry Creek School District this fall. She's being groomed as a school principal.

In hindsight, Hudson says her career path in education scores far higher than earlier aspirations of becoming a WNBA basketball star.

"I affect more lives this way," she said. "I want to give back what others gave me. I'm not a millionaire, but the gift is priceless."