

EDUCATION

# Ogeechee Technical COLLEGE...

## THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES

Sherena Williams

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Jessica Rountree



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Sir Francis Bacon (c. 1597) is credited with the statement, “Knowledge is power.” Amazingly, a phrase so succinct and seemingly simple is just as true today as it must have been in Bacon’s day. Having the power to improve one’s life is a mighty tool, gaining the knowledge that breeds that empowerment is as valuable a gift as anyone can be given. At Ogeechee Technical College (OTC) the gift of knowledge and the empowerment for changing one’s life is a daily mission.

Perhaps the school’s motto says it best: “Your Future—Our Mission.” Providing valuable hands-on training in a variety of programs designed to better the socio-economic standing of the individual, and thereby positively contributing to the economic development of the area, is the reason for the existence of OTC. While the college’s official service area includes Bulloch, Evans, and Screven Counties, students come from far and wide to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered at OTC.

Some students at OTC move straight from high school into a program of study, while others take a detour first. Jessica Rountree, a student enrolled in the Wildlife and Plantation Management degree program at OTC, made a stop elsewhere on her journey to college. After a two-year stint at East Georgia College, Jessica intended to transfer to Georgia Southern University, but she was indecisive about the area of study she should pursue at the university level.

“I just couldn’t find anything that interested me at GSU, so when I found out about the Wildlife and Plantation Management program at OTC, I was thrilled because that was something that I had always been interested in,” Jessica related.

After discussing the unique benefits of one of OTC’s newest degrees with Program Director David Lavender, Jessica found the answer to her educational needs, and her future career. She now plans to graduate with an Associates Degree next year, and hopes to get a job with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, possibly working in a Wildlife Management Area.

“Many people may think this area of study is a male dominated profession, but Jessica is a great example of how a female can excel in a job that was at one time predominately male-oriented. And, she does well in the program while working 40 hours-a-week at Tillman, Brannen and Minick,” explained Lavender.

Jonathon Moore is an example of a student who not only did well at Screven County High School, but who also did well in a dual enrollment program at OTC while in high school—so much so that Jonathon completed a Youth Apprenticeship program, and completed requirements for a certificate in Electrical Construction and Maintenance from OTC within a month of graduating high school.

“Jonathan is a great example of a student who took advantage of the opportunities that he had while in high school. He completed over 2,400 hours in the Youth Apprenticeship program, and earned a certificate from OTC less than a month



after his high school graduation thanks to the joint enrollment program. He is truly a model for what can happen when the school systems, local employers, and the college join together to offer opportunities for our kids," stated Dave Collins, Tech Prep Coordinator for OTC's three-county service area.

Anne Gailey did not wait until after high school to begin her trek through Ogeechee Tech either, she actually began coursework during her junior year at Claxton High School in the "Post Secondary Options" program offered at OTC. Following graduation from high school, Anne took a break to get married and to give birth to a son, Zakk, and then came back to OTC to begin classes in the Medical Assisting program. After graduating from that program in 2005, Anne worked at East Georgia Pediatrics until coming full circle and returning to Ogeechee Tech in 2007, as an instructor in Medical Assisting. Anne found the work at the pediatric clinic rewarding, but now, she enjoys a more challenging and personally satisfying position with a powerful influence in her chosen field helping train other Medical Assistants.

Anne's philosophy for teaching can be summed up in the paraphrase of an old adage, "If you give a man a fish, he can eat for a day, but if you teach a man to fish, he can eat for a lifetime." That philosophy also seems to sum up very well the thrust behind OTC's mission—providing that opportunity to succeed and provide for one's self and one's family for a lifetime.

There are many other stories of success at OTC. Katie Alberson was interested in nursing, but became especially intrigued with hospice nursing during her mother Lynn's illness and subsequent death. Watching hospice staff members and volunteers care for her mother and her family provided Katie with the motivation and the drive to succeed as a nursing student at OTC.

Culinary Arts graduate Sherena Williams always enjoyed cooking, but found the formal training and experience she received at OTC were what she needed to pursue a career at a local bakery.

Justin Taylor has utilized the training he received at OTC in the Turf and Golf Course Management program to help keep the playing field at Georgia Southern University's Paulson Stadium in top notch condition.

The many stories of student success and personal fulfillment are too numerous to list here, but the success stories that are mentioned illustrate what many OTC students have come to realize, that Bacon's axiom is indeed true—"Knowledge is power." They have also learned during their academic pursuits that Ogeechee Tech provides the perfect opportunity to gain the knowledge to live a more powerful life. ■



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