

Remarks from scholarship recipient Jason Elliott at the 2010 Scholarship Recognition Dinner

Good evening, Dr DiCroce, distinguished guests, scholarship donors, and fellow students. Thank you for being here tonight as we celebrate not only another successful academic year, but also the scholarship donors who made it possible. It is an honor to be here and speak on behalf of all the student scholarship recipients of Tidewater Community College. It would be impossible for me to tell you the stories of all those students. So, tonight, I would like to share with you the one I know best: my own.

It all started in the summer of 2007 when I visited the Chesapeake campus. As I had just graduated from high school, not three months before, I obviously knew everything. And one thing I knew was that TCC couldn't do anything for me and I was NOT going to a "community college." I thought I was too good for this community college. I agreed to attend classes for one, only ONE, semester, until I could find a university in the Spring. Now before you get too mad at me, here's where the story gets good.

That one semester that I was going to hate, turned into three years that I have loved. Some of the many opportunities for success have come by way of the clubs and organizations in which I have participated. I have had the opportunity to serve as a Senator, Treasurer, and even the President of the Student Government Association, along with being Chair of the Student Federation Council. I was excited to serve a year as the chartering President of the Circle K International club, and have been an active member in the International Student Alliance and Phi Theta Kappa. It has also been a pleasure to work in the Office of the Provost for over two years. I even had the honor of being the first community college student to serve as Chair for the Student Advisory Committee for the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. However, it has not only been these extracurricular activities that have molded me into the person I am today.

In the summer of 2009, I was privileged to return to the beautiful country of Brazil for the fourth time. That trip, which lasted two months, was made possible through the generous donors of the Brian P. Damiani International Experience Scholarship. While in Brazil, I had the chance to work with children of all ages. I participated in a youth outreach program offered through a seminary where we worked for several weeks with children ages 7-12 and teens 13-18. I also had the opportunity to work with over 30 children at an orphanage, doing things ranging from

helping with homework, to making artwork, cooking food, and getting beat in soccer games by a bunch of five year olds. I experienced firsthand what most people can only dream of. This trip not only allowed me to open my eyes to a whole new world, but also a glimpse into how to leave my mark on it. Through this trip, I learned that you don't have to speak a person's language to speak to his heart. You don't have to be an artist, to paint someone's rundown home. You don't have to be a chef to feed someone's soul. And you don't have to be wealthy to make a priceless impact on someone's life. These lessons cannot be taught in a classroom or learned from a book. Instead, we have to find them on our own, through life's lessons. It is because of this last trip to Brazil and the Brian P. Damiani International Experience Scholarship that I learned those lessons and purposed to make a difference, across the globe and across my own backyard.

I was also the 2009 recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship. This scholarship allowed me to study for a third and final year here at Tidewater Community College. In the Fall of 2009, thanks to this scholarship, I was able to enroll in Dr. Bert Fox's Psychology 201 class. I had always been interested in the subject, but never quite understood it and how it could work for me. However, on that very first day of class, I just knew. It is because of this class, the professor, and the college at which it was offered, that I have decided to pursue my degree in Psychology at the University of Virginia. I can clearly see how this course of study will take me directly to my goal of being a youth minister, counselor, and motivational speaker. Had it not been for taking that first Psychology class, I may never have found this route to success.

I would like to leave you with one final thought from the famous author, Nelson Henderson. Mr. Henderson once said that "The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit." Take a look around. Here in this room tonight, at your tables, sit the seeds you have planted. These seeds you have planted today are destined to become the mighty Oaks and Redwoods of tomorrow. For, even the mightiest, strongest, and tallest of trees were, at one point, nothing more than a seed. Through the love, attention, and nourishment of Tidewater Community College, the seeds that you see here tonight have been given the chance to grow and provide long awaited shade to a weary world. It is through your generous contributions to this outstanding institution that we can continue to grow and spread the seed of knowledge and success that was instilled in us while we matured from seeds to saplings. For giving me, all the scholarship recipients, and young lives everywhere the chance to grow, I thank you.