

5-3-2011

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Recommended Citation

"Graduation Day" (2011). *News Releases*. 924.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/924

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University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



Graduation Day

05.03.2011 | Students Paul Rush faced uninterested elementary school teachers, was only promoted out of junior high because of his age (16) and graduated high school weeks shy of his 20th birthday.

Sunday, May 8, the student who was terrified to go to college will graduate from the University of Dayton with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a 3.59 grade-point average. Rush, 30, from Union, Ohio, achieved so much success advisors nominated him for the 2011 Nora Duffy Award for overcoming significant obstacles to achieve a baccalaureate degree and reflecting the spirit of the Marianist tradition.

"Paul has not only overcome the obstacles in his life, but he has chosen to become a part of the system that was a major contributor to his difficulties," said Beth Lewellyn, clinical educator for early childhood education. "I have no doubt Paul will be a very positive contribution to the field of education."

Rush will join more than 1,300 undergrads participating in commencement exercises at 9:45 a.m. Sunday, May 8, in University of Dayton Arena.

More than 400 graduate students will receive degrees at 12:45 p.m. Saturday, May 7, in University of Dayton Arena.

After high school, Rush said he watched his friends join the military, run into trouble with the law or spend most of their days sleeping at their parents' homes and partying at night. He reached a point in his life where he had to make choices about his path. A chance meeting at a party steered him toward Sinclair Community College.

"I was terrified to go to college based on how poorly I did in school," Rush said. "So starting Sinclair, I started slowly, taking the minimum amount to be considered full-time. As my confidence grew, and I realized I was able to do good in school, I took more classes."

Rush said he began to realize he wasn't "dumb" after all, and with more success, he tried harder. After three years at Sinclair, Rush transferred to the University of Dayton.

"This degree means everything to me. As I am preparing to walk at graduation, I look proudly at how much I have grown the past five years. I am looking forward to my future and having a career I am passionate about. I am also no longer afraid to try new things. If I can overcome what I have overcome, I feel I can do anything without the fear of failure I once had," Rush said. "With my past and feeling like a failure for the majority of my life, I feel, as a teacher, I will be able to show students they are cared for. Also, I struggled in my schooling and I see the students that are struggling. I feel I can identify with them, and I would be able to help them. I know how they feel. I was there also."

Rush isn't the only one who overcame obstacles to reach graduation day. Tim Borchers is a Type I diabetic who also carries the gene for the brain disorder leukodystrophy, which claimed the lives of his two sisters.

"Tim has never allowed his diabetes or family loss get the best of him," said his supervisor, Lori McIlvain, a lab manager in the School of Business Administration. "He lives every day as fully as any other young man his age, balancing schoolwork, co-op jobs, campus jobs, sports, social activities and volunteer work with the Dayton Area Diabetes Association and Habitat for Humanity."

Borchers, from Dayton, Ohio, who will receive his bachelor's degree in engineering technology, will join volunteers from "Bike and Build" after graduation to ride bikes from Charleston, S.C., to Santa Cruz, Calif. The trip is to raise awareness about affordable housing and to help with home construction along the route. Borchers must raise \$4,000 for the trip and is accepting donations.

"I don't see my diabetes and family health issues as obstacles because I have always had family and friends supporting me and encouraging me to set and reach goals regardless of day-to-day challenges. My professors and colleagues have been instrumental in helping me not only achieve this accomplishment, but they have given me confidence in my ability to lead and to serve others in my community," Borchers said. "Helping others through the Dayton Area Diabetes Association Camp, and now

Bike and Build this summer, gives me an appreciation for the daily struggles others face."

Garrett Coleman, who will graduate with a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies combining urban studies and business entrepreneurship, will be making two trips of a lifetime graduation weekend. Before walking across the stage at University of Dayton Arena on Sunday, he will take the stage at the Lincoln Center in New York City Saturday morning. Coleman, a two-time World Irish Dance champion from Pittsburgh, will be premiering in "Hammerstep," a performance that strives to bridge cultural and socioeconomic differences by integrating traditional Irish step, tap and hip-hop dance. He will hustle back to Dayton Saturday evening to make Sunday's graduation ceremony.

The University's undergraduate commencement will be yet another exciting event in the past year for Cory and Emily Collins. The Collinses, both ROTC cadets, wed on New Year's Eve 2010. After graduation, they will head to Fort Riley, Kan., to finish their individual training.

In addition to the University's undergraduate and graduate commencement exercises, the School of Law will hold its ceremony at 9 a.m. Saturday, May 7, in University of Dayton Arena. Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton will deliver the commencement address to nearly 180 School of Law graduates.

All University of Dayton graduates will receive a commemorative Chaminade medal with their diplomas as a symbol of their University of Dayton education. This year, the University of Dayton is commemorating the 250th anniversary of the birth of the Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, founder of the Marianist order that founded the University of Dayton.

All three graduation ceremonies will be broadcast live and archived at the related link.

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