



AtlantiCare Executive Lori Herndon Speaks at Stockton Master's and Doctoral Commencement

125 Receive Advanced Degrees in May 8 Ceremony in Sports Center

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Galloway Township, NJ - "There will be thousands of moments when you will get to decide if optimism or pessimism will rule. Always choose optimism," Lori S. Herndon, executive vice president of AtlantiCare and president and CEO of AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, told graduates today at the Doctoral and Master's Commencement at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

"Be positive," she continued. "Believe the best is ahead and that what is good will always prevail. I am convinced that having a positive outlook sets apart the leaders of all of our professions."

President Herman Saatkamp welcomed those gathered at the college's third master's and doctoral commencement in the Sports Center and explained how Stockton's graduate program has grown.

"The State of New Jersey approved our first master's degree program, the Master of Physical Therapy, in 1994," he said. "In 1999, we awarded our first master's degrees in Business Administration, Physical Therapy and Nursing.

"In May of 2000, we graduated students in the nation's first Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies program," the president continued.

"Since then, our graduate degree programs have flourished, and in April of 2006, our very first doctoral program was approved, the Doctor of Physical Therapy. We now have 14 graduate degree programs, serving over 800 students." About 125 students received master's and doctoral degrees in the ceremony, including the first graduates of the college's Master's in American Studies program.

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Herndon, a Stockton graduate who started as an Intensive Care Unit staff nurse at ARMC Mainland Campus in 1983, has held many leadership roles at the hospital and the health system.

She used a large starfish, a symbol she explained AtlantiCare has embraced, to make five overall points in the ceremonies, saying she wished she had heard these at her own graduation. She gave each graduate a smaller starfish to keep.

“Starfish point 1: No matter what path you choose – your friends and family will always matter,” she said. She asked the graduates to applaud their families and friends in the audience.

“Starfish point 2: Treat all people with kindness and respect,” she continued. “As you lead, be consistent and value others - that will set you apart. People do their best work for leaders who treat people as they would want to be treated.”

Points 3 and 4 were to live a healthy lifestyle and stay positive.

She illustrated Point 5 by telling a story adapted from poet and scientist Loren Eiseley’s “The Star Thrower,” which she said AtlantiCare uses to foster a culture of making a difference.

A young man on a beach throwing starfish back into the sea as the tide retreated was asked by an older man why he was bothering.

“Don’t you realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it? You can’t possibly make a difference,” Herndon recounted the older man as saying.

“The young man listened politely, bent down and picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea past the breaking waves.

“I made a difference for that one,” he said.” The audience broke into applause in appreciation of that point.

“Being determined to make a difference is a worthy goal,” Herndon said. “As you live your life and build your careers, you will understand when I say - It is a choice to ‘Make A Difference.’”

Alycia N. Sterling, a resident of Lindenwold, Camden County, was the student speaker.

Sterling graduated Summa Cum Laude from Stockton in 2011 with dual undergrad degrees in Psychology and Education. She began teaching second grade in her hometown school district and then decided to further her knowledge of effective teaching practices.

Sterling returned to her alma mater to pursue a Master of Arts in Education with a concentration in Special Education, receiving her degree today.

“Reflecting on the past two years that I’ve spent in Graduate school, two words come to mind: *success* and *obstacles*,” Sterling said.

“For me, it was trying to balance a full-time job and family; losing a loved one; struggling with writing papers; doing projects; taking that long hour drive to and from campus; and attempting to have a social life,” she said.

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“Whatever your obstacles have been, there’s a sense of confidence to be gained from recognizing that you *made it through*. Knowing that you have given it your all and accomplished what some dare not even attempt is something to be proud of,” Sterling said.

“I want to end by sharing this: all of your hard work has purpose.....Regardless of the program in which you are receiving your diploma today, or what field you will eventually enter, you have the power to make a difference in your community and in the world,” Sterling said. “Share your knowledge, your skills and your gifts so that others are better off because of your contribution.”

Trustee Stanley Ellis presented the Distinguished Service Award to Herndon, who is a 1992 graduate of Stockton with a degree in Nursing and a member of the Stockton College Foundation Board. Herndon, a resident of Brigantine, earned her Master of Business Administration degree at St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia.

Ellis cited Herndon’s “extraordinary dedication to civic and community engagement, and for her instrumental roles on numerous community college, community, and State of New Jersey.”

President Saatkamp also acknowledged Mayor William Pikolycky and his wife, Denise, of Woodbine, NJ, whose daughter, Jessica, was awarded the Master of Arts in Education - her third Stockton degree.

The president asked for a moment of silence in memory of Theodore Cawley of Cape May Court House, NJ, who died at 54 two weeks before he would have received his Master of Arts in American Studies. Cawley was a fifth and sixth grade computer science teacher in Lower Township’s Charles W. Sandman Consolidated School in Cape May County.

Dr. Kesselman presented the master’s and doctoral students, while Dean Lewis Leitner, of the School of Graduate and Continuing Studies, performed the hooding ceremony. President Saatkamp conferred their degrees.

Singing of “Our Stockton,” the college’s alma mater, was led by Joseph Sramaty of Forked River in Ocean County, a student in the School of Arts and Humanities, who also sang the National Anthem. Dr. Beverly Vaughn, professor of Music, accompanied Sramaty on piano.

The alma mater’s lyrics were written by Pulitzer-Prize winning poet Stephen Dunn, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing; the music is by musician, educator and reviewer Ellen Grolman. Dunn is giving the commencement speech in morning ceremonies here on Sunday, May 11.

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