

# The Student Connection: Scholarships provide Erroll Moore an opportunity for success

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Adversity can make or break you – pushing you past the point of recovery, or lighting a fire that drives success. For Erroll Moore (RN '16), times “paved with solitude and hardship awakened an insatiable hunger to achieve.”

Born in America, Erroll moved at a young age to the Republic of Guyana – his parent’s homeland, a tropical country on South America’s north Atlantic coast. Having a father with a lengthy criminal history who discouraged education, he and his siblings were raised solely by their mother. “My mom sacrificed all to provide us with a sound education. She was determined to break the trend of illiteracy rampant in my father’s family,” explained Erroll.

Scoring high on entrance examinations, Erroll was accepted into Bishops High School, one of Guyana’s top senior schools in the capital city of Georgetown. He excelled and became the first male in his father’s family to graduate high school. To celebrate this achievement, his mother and pastor organized a community meal for the homeless children in Georgetown. “Our actions were small compared to the poverty that exists, but we helped quell the hunger of children who were unsure of where their next meal would come from,” Errol remembered.

Interested in medicine and excited to further his studies, Errol returned to America to join the U.S. Army, moving in with his maternal grandfather and step-grandmother in Queens, NY. However, his excitement was soon dampened by the rejection from the Army due to his asthma and his step-grandmother’s insistence that he move out. On the verge of being homeless, he decided to enroll in the Medical Assistants program at CUNY’s York College program, only to be told that his high school transcript from Guyana was not recognized by the school. A College advisor encouraged him to obtain his GED – which he did through the SUNY Queens Educational Opportunity Center.

Now homeless and working at a Subway restaurant, he caught a break when the restaurant owner offered her attic as housing. Still, he struggled; most of his income went to rent, tuition and transportation, leaving him little or no money for food. With an extremely unhealthy diet he developed food poisoning, colitis and malnutrition, finding himself in and out of the hospital.

His health issues interfered with his studies, motivating his instructor to intervene and contact his grandparents. While his step-grandmother refused to take Erroll back in, the basement tenants Bibi and Oswald Teekasingh allowed him to live in their apartment while he finished his exams and his clinicals. Erroll graduated from the York program with a 97% average.

The Teekasinghs were relocating from Queens to Binghamton and invited Erroll to move with them. Still wanting to pursue his education, he accepted their offer and was soon enrolled in the nursing program at SUNY Broome — a success story in itself, as the highly competitive program has more than 1,000 applicants each year for only 90 available slots.

Being accepted into the program was one hurdle; paying for college was yet another. With the help of the Financial Aid office, his TAP and FAFSA grants were processed and he began searching for available scholarships. In Fall of 2013, he applied for and was awarded a Second Chance Scholarship through the BCC Foundation. Established by Dr. Angelo and Kathleen Mastrangelo, this scholarship assists students who demonstrate the potential and the desire to continue their formal education, but are hindered due to problematic life circumstances. Erroll fit the criteria perfectly. He also is a recipient of both the Foundation's Lee Phillips Lynch Memorial Scholarship and the Eckler Scholarship.

Erroll is now in his second year of studies at SUNY Broome with a plan to graduate Spring 2016. He worked this past summer as a Patient Care Assistant at Lourdes Hospital, but was anxious for the fall semester to start so he could carry on his studies and raise his GPA from a 3.9 to 4.0.

He will continue to put in about 16 hours a month at Lourdes, just enough to keep active, but not too many hours to interfere with his grades. "Receiving the scholarships are why I am able to concentrate on my studies. If I had to work full-time and try to get my degree, I wouldn't be able to get the grades I do or even graduate on time. Being concerned about your basic needs consumes a lot of energy," explained Erroll.

His efforts and perseverance do not go unnoticed by those around him. "In addition to his outstanding academic ability, Erroll is a remarkable and well-rounded individual," said Assistant Professor of Biology Diane Kelly. "His attention to detail in his classwork required me to become a better teacher to keep up with him! These qualities make him particularly well suited for a career in medicine."

Despite his struggles, Erroll recognizes and appreciates how others have contributed to his success: from his mother making sure he received a quality education, to his "adoptive" family the Teekasinghs (Oswald has since passed away, but he stills lives with Bibi) ensuring that his dream did not disappear, to the support he receives at SUNY Broome through scholarships and faculty.

He remembers his first semester when he questioned whether he could handle the program and was calmed by clinical instructor Geralyn Sears. "She believed in me," Erroll said. In addition, Sears encouraged him to apply for the job at Lourdes and now has him lined up to teach a skills lab for freshmen.

Erroll describes passionately his experience at Broome: "Everyone here wants you to succeed – I can't even find the words to say how supportive the College has been. This kind of environment is a strong motivator."

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