



SVCC STUDENT LEARNS THAT IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO START OVER

Irene Fowlkes is starting over. At age 56, she has passed the test for her GED, enrolled in college and is making plans for a new job and future helping others.

One lesson Fowlkes learned along the way was that in order to help others, you must first help yourself.

Fowlkes dropped out of school in the sixth grade. She had a child and then, worked in a restaurant from age 15 to 18. At age 18, she started her career as a factory worker at Burkeville Veneer Plant where she remained for the next 22 years. From that job, she moved on to Amelia Dress Company until she became physically unable to continue working in a factory setting. She babysat for two of her grandchildren until they got old enough to catch the bus for school on their own and then she headed back to school herself. She studied for the GED at Amelia/Nottoway VoTech and also at SVCC's Middle College. Determined, Fowlkes had to take the test three times before successfully completing each part. About leaving school so early, she noted that "I missed everything."

Fowlke married at age 21 and ended up raising her daughter and two sons as a single mother after ten years. She now has ten grandchildren and one great grandson.

She is enrolled in the Human Services Program at SVCC. She wants to teach someday to help others and show them the importance of an education.

Fowlkes attends school at SVCC and holds a job as a work/study for Middle College. Transportation from her home in Blackstone to the Alberta campus costs her \$1.00 per day as she rides the Blackstone Area Bus for the commute.

"If God gives you the opportunity to start over, please do. Accomplish something for yourself," she said.

She also hopes to encourage all adults and children to continue to study because in order to do anything, any kind of job, you need an education.

For more information on GED preparation, the Middle College at SVCC and Adult Basic Education, contact the college through the toll free number 1-888-200-7549.

