



News Release

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Sometimes It Takes Just One More Class

Mike O'Malley, a 1989 White Bear High School graduate, took a boatload of credit classes at Century College (the former Lakewood Community College) between 1989 and 1995.

Life intervened, however, and he left college just one class short of earning his two-year Associate in Arts degree. O'Malley remained without a college degree for 13 years until he learned of his one-class deficit. At that point, he went back to Century, took the class and earned his college degree. (He also earned an A in that final class.)

"Finishing what you start is the right thing to do," said O'Malley, 40, of Forest Lake. "It is also one of those things you do so that you can tell your kids that you earned your college degree – and so should they."

O'Malley clearly remembers the day he walked into Century College counselor Charlotte Nordstrom's office and asked her to check his academic record to see how close he was to earning a degree. "When she told me I only had one English class to take, I was really surprised," said O'Malley. "She found me a night class that was still open, and the next Tuesday night, I was in a literature class on the subject of books that have been made into films. It was a great class taught by Andrew Nasset. I still find myself talking about some of the things I learned."

A self-employed entrepreneur who has operated businesses in landscaping, construction and real estate, O'Malley said you never know how undergraduate classes in psychology, accounting or communication will help you later in life – but they do.

"I took all my classes for the love of learning," said O'Malley. "Going back to school as an adult was fun because you are exposed to people of all ages, races and economic status. I sat in the front of the class because I really wanted to learn something, but the younger ones tend to sit in cluster in the back. I was in a suit and tie after working all day, and some of them had wild hair color and piercings. It was all OK. We learned from each other."

O'Malley said more adults should return to college. "It expands your world," he said. "You can spend the evening watching re-runs on TV, or you can learn something new. College is so much more interesting."



Photo: Mike O'Malley