

Christine Strunk



I don't know if you know this or not but I was on the cover of Time Magazine, April 2006 titled "Dropout Nation." At that time, I was dealing with difficult instructors that made you feel as if you were just a number in the system. I remember one instructor mentioning that I was just a paycheck to them. My High School environment was unhealthy and it was not suited for learning. So all I wanted to do was get a job and leave school. All of this led me to drop out of school.

For the last 19 years I've attempted several times to finish my diploma but being a stay at home mom of 3 kids and putting their needs first, I wasn't able to complete my diploma. I worked dead end jobs here and there and my son had therapy several times a week on top of doctor appointments. This was another reason why I couldn't go back to school. Driving past the McDowell building daily made me curious and I looked up their website to see what was offered. After seeing the website I felt assured this was the path I was meant to take to finally achieve my diploma.

October 7, 2025 2 days after my 38th birthday I got to ring the bell and I officially got my diploma. I did it! I cried walking out of the building with pride and joy. I felt so accomplished and relieved that I knew I had done what I felt like was impossible for the last 19 years.

I am currently in a job that I love but I was restricted in advancing because I didn't have my high school diploma. Now having my diploma I am able to go further in my career and pursue my certification in Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA) which is a free career certification class offered by McDowell. This will also allow me to further my education to attend college so that I may become a registered nurse.

To anyone that reads this please know that it is never too late to get your diploma. Never give up! Anything is possible as long as you're determined and work for it. Believe in yourself and never be afraid to ask for help because without my teacher, Mr. Derek Reed's help at McDowell I would not be where I am. Be okay stepping out of your comfort zone and believing not all learning experiences have to be bad. Reach for the sky and always believe in yourself!