



# **Patient Advocate and Entrepreneur Whitney Joy Found Confidence at L&C**

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**GODFREY** – While doubts and a lack of confidence hold most people back, Lewis and Clark Community College alumna Whitney Joy used those doubts to light her path.

A Memphis, Tennessee native, Joy came to L&C after she had already earned her bachelor's degree.

"I received a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Austin Peay State University in 2005," Joy said. "I worked in the television industry as a production assistant but did not find the satisfaction I was expecting in the job."

Although she always wanted to work in the healthcare industry, low confidence prevented her from trying. After seeing a CNN story about people with bachelor's degrees finding success after returning to community college, she decided to take a chance.

"I applied to L&C because my friends had positive things to say about it," Joy said. "I also liked the small class sizes and felt that I would be treated like an individual, not a number."

Joy chose a career in occupational therapy because it's holistic in nature and she's able to combine her communication skills with science. Interacting with patients has become her favorite part of the job.

"I absolutely love working with people from all walks of life," she said. "They think they are learning from me but, truthfully, it is the other way around."

She graduated with honors from L&C with an Associate of Applied Science from the Occupational Therapy Assistant program in 2012, then went on to earn a Master of Occupational Therapy from Belmont University in 2018.

While at L&C, Joy was awarded the L&C Foundation Post Baccalaureate Associate Degree Career Scholarship in 2010-2011 and the Linda L. Orr Occupational Therapy Assistant Scholarship in 2012. She also served as president of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Club from 2010 to 2012.

Joy lives in Memphis and, after working as an in-home occupational therapist, she recently started her own practice, Aspire Therapies, a home-based pediatric practice, while serving as vice president of the Tennessee Occupational Therapy Association.

She learned just how good L&C's Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program is when she started her field work, which is the portion of the program where students begin working with patients under the supervision of a licensed therapist.

“Students in the graduate occupational therapy programs at the same clinical site were asking questions about diagnoses and different treatment approaches,” Joy said. “When I saw that my clinical reasoning skills were just as good as those of a graduate student, I knew the OTA program prepared me to be a success after graduation.”

She credits former OTA Professor Emeritus Linda Orr for instilling a passion for the field in her and for teaching her how to advocate for her profession.

“Linda Orr was the reason I pursued a leadership role at the state level,” Joy said.

Associate Professor Ashley Harris also had a positive impact on Joy’s life.

“Ashley Harris was the first black occupational therapist I’d encountered,” Joy said. “People of color are in the minority in the rehabilitation field, so when I saw her in a leadership role in occupational therapy, I knew I could do it too. She is the reason I pursued a leadership role in the Tennessee Occupational Therapy Association.”

Joy believes her time at L&C helped build her confidence as a practitioner.

“If you told me I’d be on the executive board of the state occupational therapy association or a business owner 20 years ago, I would have laughed,” she said. “Lewis and Clark helped me say, ‘Why not?’”

Among Joy’s goals is to grow her business while helping those in economically depressed areas.

“Systemic racism and economic disparities in many communities are real,” she said. “I feel it is my duty as an occupational therapist to fight this and help individuals overcome these issues.”

For more information on L&C’s Occupational Therapy Assistant program, contact Program Coordinator Debbie Witsken at (618) 468-4419 or [dwitsken@lc.edu](mailto:dwitsken@lc.edu).

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Photo caption: *L&C Occupational Therapy Assistant program graduate Whitney Joy has gone on to earn her master’s degree and start her own business.*