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## Take Time to Compliment Those Who Inspire You

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## Take Time to Compliment Those Who Inspire You

By Denver Severt  
UCF Forum columnist  
Saturday, December 1, 2012

Sometimes we cross paths with others who inspire and motivate greatness. This is particularly true in a learning community such as UCF.

On occasion, I stop to acknowledge individuals who exhibit such greatness.

Please meet R.Z., M.T., P.A. and a piano duo.

### **R.Z., an accounting graduate student**

After serving as a member on R.Z.'s Honors in the Major undergraduate thesis committee, I accepted a request to write him a letter of recommendation for law school. We first met when we struck up a conversation at an art booth at the downtown Orlando Farmer's Market near Lake Eola. R.Z. later asked me to serve on his thesis committee. Though I knew him quite well I realized I knew little about his accomplishments, so I requested a resume.

There was so much more to know. He was one of Florida's youngest to earn the Eagle Scout designation, graduated with high honors as an accounting student and earned a Masters of Science, was a four-year member of the UCF Marching Band, passed the CPA examination on his first attempt, and earned his 2,000 hours to finish the time requirement for the CPA licensure. Next, at the age of 22, he wants to try for Master of Laws and Juris Doctor degrees.

R.Z. exhibits a continual deferral of instant gratification for the sake of continued enrichment. His demeanor is one of focus and humility.

### **M.T., a recent criminal justice graduate**

I was shopping membership rates at a fitness center and M.T. helped me. He was currently the assistant general manager and his UCF degree hung in his cubicle.

During the visit, he told me there were 168 hours in a week, and that most people need to get their heart rate in the fat-burning range a minimum of three times weekly. He told me that exceeding the upper part of the range was counterproductive as it burned muscle. He calculated my body fat index with a machine and showed me exactly the customized routine I needed.

He calculated that the cost for three years at his gym is equivalent to one year at my current gym. He showed me that during the fourth year my fee would go down, and wrote it all down so I could take it with me.

M.T. blew my mind with his assistance, focus, interaction skills and level of engagement. Though he had worked six years at the fitness center and was assistant general manager, he was not impressed with his accomplishments. He had a plan to be a federal agent. That takes three years of fieldwork or two years in an M.S. program in addition to his current major.

While on his sixth shift of the week, M.T. said maybe a graduate degree is not for him as he is not sure he is a good student, but I left motivated and inspired to join his gym.

### **P.A., a Ph.D. alumna**

I chaired P.A.'s dissertation committee. For years, she and her husband tried to become parents. Finally, a pregnancy was confirmed, but it ended sadly in a miscarriage. Recently, while I was on Facebook, an instant message popped up from P.A.: "Good news!"

"What?" I instantly messaged back. She answered: "Once the papers are signed, we will be adopting, will send pictures."

Days later, I opened an email attachment from P.A. to see the smiling faces of her, her husband, and *seven* beautiful children.

As the first graduate from our Ph.D. program at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management, she is a caregiver for her husband, who has a seizure disorder, and she always exhibits an indomitable spirit. Her email indicated a whole new level of her

greatness. Recently, they took the whole clan from their home in Charlotte, N.C., to Disney World for their first Thanksgiving together.

### **Piano Duo, undergraduate students**

I met this couple while I was waiting for a meeting at the UCF teaching and learning academy. Passersby are allowed to play the piano there, and when I approached we all began to talk about playing.

They were warm and welcomed me into their conversation: “Do you play?”

I said, “Some,” and one of them offered: “Would you like to play next?”

The manners, thoughtfulness, and beautiful piano music from this duo created a sense of family. As I left, one of them said, “We are here multiple days on and off. Join us anytime.” I did not get their names. The male-female duo shared humility, craftsmanship, and friendliness.

Take a leap of faith in this season of gratitude and acknowledge the greatness you see in someone.

You never know what this simple action may spark.

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