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Pam Starling

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Baldwyn Veteran Completes Degree with UM-Booneville

After years with the military and local industries, Witt looks to serve community

JULY 21, 2019 BY PAM STARLING

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Elliott Witt, of Baldwyn, celebrates his graduation from the University of Mississippi in May with his fiancée, Summer Sandlin (left), and his mother, Lisa Witt. A U.S. Army veteran, Witt attended the UM-Booneville campus with plans to mentor and help students in his community. Submitted photo

BOONEVILLE, Miss. – William Elliott Witt, of Baldwyn, credits his high school teachers, college professors and his mother for their influences in his life that have led him to pursue a career in educating the next generation.

"I wouldn't be as driven or goal-oriented," Witt said. "I want to invest in the lives of others in my community, just like they did for me."

A 2006 graduate of Baldwyn High School, Witt wasn't sure if college was for him.

He worked at various jobs around Northeast Mississippi after graduation and joined the Army in 2011, working as a fire support specialist attached to infantry and cavalry units from the 2nd 114th out of Starkville.

"My teachers saw the potential in me, and they invested in me. I didn't see what they saw in me until I joined the Army. Then I realized more about myself and the potential that I had."

After two years of active duty, Witt decided to use his military tuition benefits to begin taking college courses at Mississippi State University.

"I found out the Army would pay for school and realized that this would be my chance to be the first person in my family to earn a bachelor's degree."

"I wanted to show my younger family members that you can achieve your goals when you try."

In 2015, Witt needed to move closer to home and once again delayed his dream of a college degree while he worked full time.

In 2017, he found out about the University of Mississippi's Booneville center and the opportunity to keep working while earning his degree through evening and online classes with Ole Miss.

"I had a variety of credits, and the general studies degree helped me combine them into my ideal major," Witt said.

Witt says he always knew he wanted to go into the education field and earning minors in English, education and history helped him meet his goal. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in May.

Alida Moore, an English instructor at UM-Booneville, said that Witt was always quick with an answer, insightful comment or story in her class.

"His maturity and real-world experiences made him a bright and engaging student," Moore said.

Witt's mother, Lisa Witt, has owned and operated the Honey Tree preschool in Baldwyn for 40 years.

"My mom raised three boys as a single mother, and I saw how much she invested into my brothers and me," he said. "I hope I make her proud by continuing her legacy."

Witt says he hopes he will be an inspiration to others, much as the mentors in his life have.

"I want to give that back to a student who may be in that same situation that I was in, perhaps someone from a single family home who doesn't have that solid figure to mentor and encourage them," he said.

"I want to be a mentor who pushes them to be the best that they can, just like my mother and my teachers did for me."

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Students Learn 'Real Politics' in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

Witt's fiancée, Summer Sharplin, also has the same career goals. She is a graduate of the UM-Booneville campus and teaches second grade at Ashland Elementary School.

"Summer and my mom have motivated me to help others," Witt said. "I am happy to be in a family that is serving our community. The main reason I want to be an educator is to give back and change lives."

For more information on the UM-Booneville center, visit <http://www.outreach.olemiss.edu/booneville/>.



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