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Diana Antone of Topawa is named student of the year by Tohono O'odham Community College

May 18, 2018



Diana Antone of Topawa, Baboquivari District, is the daughter of Morris Antone and Corine Ahil-Antone. Photo by Jerry Edwards

Sells- Diana Antone loves children. Her love includes having an open mind, respect, patience, and understanding, which she says are key qualities needed for working successfully in early childhood education.

She addressed this theme of connecting with the younger generation in her speech at the Tohono O'odham Community College Commencement on May 18. "Pay attention to the little ones," she says. "Take care in introducing the world to children—how you see the world, they'll come to see it that way, too."

Antone is a member of the Class of 2018, graduating with an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education (ECE). She has attended Tohono O'odham Community College full time for two years. During this past school year, she worked as a cashier at the local grocery store and as an intern in the

college's Student Success Center and served as the West Campus Representative on Ka: g T-Ñi'okĩ—the Student Senate.

Inspired by the challenges and strength of her family

Diana says she is inspired by her family. She is motivated by her father, who pushed through a long and difficult fight with cancer and is living strong today. She learned to savor the moment from her younger brother, the late Joaquin J. Antone, who was born with cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy is a condition in which a brain injury impairs muscles, posture, and coordination. However, a person with cerebral palsy can think, talk, and enjoy life just like other people. Diana saw that Joaquin was excited about the little things in life, such as going out into the community, attending school, watching sporting events, going to birthday parties, and his favorite of all, attending rodeos.

In caring for her brother, Diana learned both to appreciate the opportunities of life and to focus on going beyond first impressions to really know a person.

Diana has a close, loving relationship with her five children, ranging in ages from 5 to 16. While the children are involved with sports and rodeo, Diana's favorite time is just being at home with them. She appreciates daily life with her "better half," rancher Mario Arvicio, and she is grateful that he serves as a right hand with her in raising the children and journeying together through life.

TOCC's ECE Instructor Erin Aguilar said that Diana's affinity for children is an asset for her future career in Early Childhood Education. "Diana is hardworking and dedicated to learning more about the early childhood field. She will be an asset to the students and families whom she works with wherever her career takes her. Working with her over the last year I have seen her grow and develop into an amazing future educator," he said.

Diana was selected as TOCC's Student of the Year in March 2018 and traveled to the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) Student Conference in Bismarck, ND to receive the award, which came with an American Indian College Fund (AICF) scholarship check. She will use the scholarship next school year as she pursues a B.A. degree in Early Childhood Education from Prescott College or Arizona State University.

Going to college? Two suggestions

For those considering starting college, Diana has two suggestions: First, enroll with a friend. Diana registered at TOCC after one of her friends encouraged her to go to college. The two friends attended together for Diana's first semester. Later, when her friend was discouraged and had stopped coming to college, Diana encouraged her to re-start with a new major. Both women were honored at TOCC's recent Student Recognition Awards Banquet.

Diana's second piece of advice is that if you can, begin in the summer, as she did. Taking a summer session course will help you get used to studying and introduce you to the college community in the relaxed summer session environment.

She also said, "Keep an open mind about things, experience and explore—because if you're not enjoying what you're doing, then why do it?"

Registration is open at Tohono O'odham Community College for both summer and fall. Summer session begins on May 29, and fall classes start on August 20. More information is available at 520-383-8401 or www.tocc.edu.