

Kid Genius to Graduate College at 14, Credits God

This fall kids across the country are heading back to school. But 14-year-old Thessalonika Arzu-Embry is the exception. She's preparing to graduate—from college.

Like most 14-year-old girls, Thessalonika likes to have fun. She enjoys skating in her Great Lakes neighborhood as well as playing tennis.

Yet, while most girls her age are entering their freshman year of high school, complete with discussions about boys and all the latest fashions, Thessalonika has been focused on more important matters.

She has been attending college since she was 11.

"It's similar to any environment but this environment was full of learning, a learning experience for me," she told CBN News. "I looked forward to it."

An Early Passion for Learning

Thessalonika's mother, Wonder Embry, said she noticed her daughter's exceptional gift and passion for learning while home schooling her.

"I started reading to her my college books and she understood college material at 6 years old, 8 years old," she said.

"The first topic that I read about was consciousness in sleeping dreams and about the neurons in the brain and I thought that was very interesting to study," Thessalonika recalled.

Her mom said her daughter's quickness for learning encouraged her to enroll the then 11-year-old in classes at Lake County College.

“Academically and mentally she was prepared for it,” her mom said. “And I didn’t want to put a cap on it and hinder her and limit her if she was able to accomplish it. And I just went on and encouraged her to go ahead and make the most of it.”

Many see Thessalonika’s academic aptitude as extraordinary, but the girl genius sees her college experience as just the norm.

“I was treated normal in class and a lot of classes didn’t bring attention to my age at all,” she said. “I just completed the work like the rest of the students.”

Thessalonika has a 199 I.Q. and she said she never once felt overwhelmed by college-level work.

“Some of the assignments had, like, two pages of work and stuff and that was very easy to complete,” she said. “There were some assignments that required only five pages of work and I went like way over the amount.”

The impressive teen has received numerous awards and certificates, is a member of her school’s honor college, and served as a student senator.

Starting the Day with God

As devout Christians, Thessalonika and her family begin each day with prayer and Bible study. She said her faith and family support are the keys to her academic success.

Her family attends Bill Winston Ministries in Forest Park, Ill., where she and her older brother, Jeremy, are part of the youth group.

“I thank God for that because he has given me the ability to learn like in Proverbs 28:5. It says ‘They that seek the Lord understand all things.’ And I’m very thankful for that,” she said.

“We didn’t plan on it, but it’s God’s glory to give us the

wisdom to even go through this,” her mom said.

After completing classes at College of Lake County, Thessalonika went on to attend Chicago State University where she is set to receive a bachelor’s degree in psychology with a 3.9 GPA. Once she receives her degree, she said she plans to continue her education.

“I also plan to go to graduate school to get a Psy.D in clinical psychology,” she told CBN News.

But before grad school, she plans to get her learner’s permit.

A Life of Purpose

Thessalonika hopes to one day open a clinic with her mother, who is currently pursuing a graduate degree in clinical psychology along with her 23-year-old brother Jeremy.

Jeremy is also a psychology major graduating this year.

Wonder Embry said both of her children are motivated about learning and hearing from God about their future.

“He put that in their heart to pursue clinical psychology to help people that are going through mental challenges, help the youth with esteem and all those issues that tend to come in on them. I feel very thankful to God,” Wonder said.

Meanwhile, some might think this 14-year-old college graduate has missed out on just being a kid, but Thessalonika says she is living a very purposeful life.