

News Release

South Seattle Community College

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 10, 2009

Commencement Celebrates Student Success

College graduates first class of four-year Hospitality Management students.

Thursday, June 18

7:30 pm, Jerry Brockey Student Center

South Seattle Community College

6000 16th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98106

Graduation is a time to celebrate stories of success and the paths that students have taken to reach their goals. At South Seattle Community College, the accomplishments of the class of 2009 will be celebrated at the annual commencement ceremony taking place at 7:30 pm on Thursday, June 18, in the Jerry Brockey Student Center.

This year, 722 students have earned degrees and certificates, including 266 in academic transfer, 349 in professional/technical studies, and 13 students in the college's new four-year Hospitality Management degree program. An additional 94 students earned high school diplomas or GEDs.

The graduating mother-daughter team of Ragni ("Regina") and Sheronica Saran is just one of the many inspirational stories found among our students. Regina, an energetic, 44-year old single mom who immigrated to Seattle from Singapore in 2002, had little job experience when faced with the prospect of supporting herself and her two daughters. She knew she had to go back to school, and chose South because its *Start Here, Go Anywhere* motto reflected exactly what she planned to do.

Two years ago her daughter Sheronica, a student at Evergreen High School, joined her at South, attending through the Running Start program, which offers high school students the opportunity to take college classes concurrently with their high school courses. By carrying a full load of classes at the high school and college level, the 18-year old has earned both a high school diploma and associate of arts (AA) degree. She also earned honor roll status and serves her community as a volunteer at the White Center Food Bank.

Attending college together was "pretty cool" according to Sheronica. As fellow South students, she and her mom studied and learned from each other, while sharing the stresses of homework and exams.

Regina readily admits that being a full-time, older student and mother was difficult at times, but considers the result well worth it.

"It's an honor to see that I'm graduating with my daughter," she said. "I believe I've set the bar high for all of us and I hope to inspire many other mothers."

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GRADUATION CELEBRATES STUDENT SUCCESS ADD ONE

Instructor Jessie McDonald knows the family well and has seen Regina's goal-oriented, hard work philosophy reflected in the Saran children.

"She's an incredible woman who encourages her girls to explore all aspects of life," she said admiringly. "Seeing their mother's drive, ambition and willingness to do what it takes to get where she wants to go – that has been instrumental in Sheronica's success."

Next week is a huge one for the high-achieving Saran family – first there's Sheronica's high school graduation, then on the 18th, mother and daughter will share the stage as AA degree recipients. This fall, Sheronica transfers to the University of Washington to study art and computer technology, while Regina begins South's BAS in Hospitality Management program. Not to be outdone, seven-year old Shreveinna is already planning to follow their footsteps to South, declaring emphatically, "I'm going to be a doctor!"

Another highlight of the 2009 commencement is the first graduation of students in the college's Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Hospitality Management program. South was in the first group of pilot programs three years ago when the state legislature granted two-year colleges the authority to offer four-year degrees in specific disciplines.

South's BAS in Hospitality Management program, the only one of its kind in western Washington, focuses on management, marketing, human resources, and technical positions in all facets of the hospitality industry. Its success is demonstrated by outstanding student retention rates – nearly 100% for the graduating and first-year students – job placement, and industry support.

The graduating BAS students all have jobs and many have been promoted in their current positions. Current and graduating program students are working in management positions at Safeco and Qwest Fields; restaurants including PF Chang's, Barking Frog, and Cheesecake Factory; Rainier and Sandpoint Country Clubs, and luxury hotels like the Fairmont Olympic, Westin, and Crowne Plaza.

South's motto – *Start Here, Go Anywhere* – is exemplified by our graduates, and the college congratulates them on their achievements.



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