



CHAngemakers

When Tyra Stephens, an honor student at Simeon Career Academy, was applying for colleges, she didn't care where she went. She simply wanted a school that would help take the financial burden off her mother.

She chose Ball State University. The four-year University in Muncie, Indiana paid for room, board and tuition. But college is expensive, and there were miscellaneous fees for things like books and car maintenance. That's when the Chicago Housing Authority's Scholarship Program assisted.

"I receive \$1,000 every academic year from CHA," Stephens said. "If someone can give me \$1,000 a year, every year, it's a relief to my mind. Ball State is a 3 1/2-hour drive. Things like oil changes and books are never included in scholarships. One book alone is about \$200. So, it has definitely helped me."

Stephens will graduate in May with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and Criminology.

Stephens was always an honor student. She grew up in a single-parent home in Stateway Gardens, surrounded by friends and family. When she was six years old, she moved when Stateway was demolished. But her memories of Stateway are good ones.

"My entire family lived in Stateway; so that is pretty much all I knew," she said. "I was absolutely always on the honor roll. I never had issues in school. I was the second person in my family to go to college. My mom was the first to attend college, so she understood that college was a gateway to a better life. Everyone was in bed by 9 p.m. We got proper rest and food. I come from a large family, so I had cousins galore. It wasn't difficult because we had a strong family and we never strayed away from each other, even when we left Stateway. We were always together."

Stephens graduated from Simeon with a 3.2 GPA and began looking for colleges.

"A degree is a degree, it didn't matter where it was from," she said. "It was about who was going to give me a scholarship. I applied to about 15 schools, and the University Iowa and Ball State were my final two choices. Ball State offered the largest scholarship, so that is the school I chose. I'd never heard of it before I came here."

Stephens chose Criminal Justice and Criminology as her major because, growing up, she saw how family members were treated unfairly in the criminal justice system.

"I wanted to be better than what I saw when I witnessed family members being treated horribly while they were on probation," Stephens said.

Done with her coursework, Stephens is currently an intern at the Marion County Adult Probation Division in Indianapolis - the final leg of her college career. Once she graduates, she hopes to become a probation officer, and - just like in college - she'll go where the opportunity takes her.

"I'm open to new options," she said. "East Coast, West Coast, doesn't matter. I took a chance when I came to Ball State. I'm ready to do the same with my career."



Tyra Stephens got a full ride to Ball State University, with vital help from the CHA's Scholarship program. Four years later, the former resident of Stateway Gardens is about to graduate with a degree in Criminal Justice and Criminology. She is on the road to becoming a probation officer. "I took a chance when I came to Ball State. I'm ready to do the same with my career."