



**CLEVELAND**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**SUCCESS**  
STORY

## **Loretta Patton, GED**

Loretta Patton didn't let a little thing like age stop her from reaching one of her life-long goals of finishing her high school education. At the age of 92, Patton walked across the stage at Cleveland Community College and accepted her GED. In doing so, she became the oldest GED recipient in the state of North Carolina proving you are never too old to finish your education. "If I can do it, they can do it," Loretta said during the ceremony.

Elegantly dressed in her black cap and gown accessorized by a gleaming smile, Loretta proved something not only to herself, but to anyone who has ever considered completing their education. "She serves as a constant reminder for us to never give up on our goals," CCC President Dr. Steve Thornburg said after Patton was presented with a framed copy of her diploma.

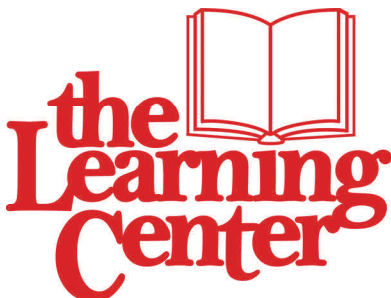
Carolyn Black was Patton's basic skills instructor and recalls the first day she came to class. "She came into class, and she said, 'I'm doing this because I think education is so exciting,'" Black said. She thought everyone needed an education and by the time she finished speaking I tearfully looked at the class and said, "If this doesn't motivate you people, I don't know what will."

Patton said students would come and talk to her during class and they always asked how she was doing. "The support from everyone has been overwhelming. When I realized I was going to have to take a math course in order to pass the math portion of the test, I said I'm going to stop." Patton recalls. "But I didn't, thanks to all of the support from other students and my instructors."

Patton is a New York native and went to high school in Buffalo, New York where she lived on her own from the age of 15. She took three years of high school classes and worked at night as a cabaret singer and dancer. At the age of 17, she had to quit school and support herself. Throughout her 75 year working career, Patton wore many hats and worked all of the jobs without ever earning a high school diploma. For years she worked as an executive secretary, a waitress, a caretaker for the elderly and an income-tax preparer. At one time Patton had over 500 clients for her income-tax service.



As Patton stood on stage in front of her fellow students, instructors, and family on graduation day, cheers erupted from everyone in the audience and many wiped tears from their eyes. Loretta Patton's personal journey was truly felt by everyone present. "There wasn't a dry eye in the place," said former CCC Vice President of Continuing Education Dr. Barbara Greene. "It was a very special moment for all of us."



Today, Patton, who still lives independently and drives, can be found volunteering at the local Senior Center and insists that what she really wants is a job and says her age shouldn't be a hiring factor for potential employees, especially when her mind is still sharp. "I'm versatile and there is no reason why I can't do something, she says."

So, what is next now that she has her diploma? "I want to live to be 100," she says. "I have plans for the future and I'm going to get there!"