

# A Class Act

“If it wasn’t for AmeriCorps, I wouldn’t have done it,” said Juanita Hatcher, former CHP AmeriCorps State member and current front desk assistant at the Warwick SRO.

Exactly what did she do? At the age of 52, and thirty-three years after leaving high school, Hatcher has completed and received her high school diploma!

As an AmeriCorps State member, Hatcher completed two years of service, during which time she logged 3,400 service hours. Because Hatcher successfully completed the annual service requirements, she received the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of \$4,725 for each completed year. However, Hatcher feared she would have to pass the money up due to an award requirement that members must have a high school diploma or GED. Hatcher was 1.5 credits shy of originally receiving her diploma when she decided to leave school and start a family over three decades ago.

“I constantly told my children (ages 14 and 12) to stay in school,” said Hatcher “but I realized I didn’t have a right to tell them that if I hadn’t finished school myself.”

With her children and AmeriCorps as her motivation, Hatcher started adult high school education classes in June of 2009 and completed the program in September 2009. However, graduation wasn’t held until August 2010, and that’s when it all “hit home” for Hatcher.

“I just couldn’t believe it was happening. Graduation practice was very emotional for me, but during the actual ceremony I was just very, very excited. I felt so happy and proud of myself,” said Hatcher.

Throughout the process, Hatcher credits her husband, children, and the Warwick SRO family for being very supportive.

“I remember the initial phone call telling her that she had to complete her diploma,” said AmeriCorps Program Director Jasmin Cotman,” and now here she is with close to \$10,000 to use towards college tuition!”

With her two education awards, Hatcher plans to attend school to receive an Associates Degree in Criminal Justice.

“I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank you AmeriCorps!” said Hatcher.

