



## Promo Pathway Valedictorian Takes Control of Her Own Story

09.04.2018

Just a year before completing Promo Pathway, valedictorian Tammy Jo Dearen was 47 years old, with no savings and no retirement plan, who "really believed I was just a free spirit that chose the path less traveled."

Over the course of the program, all that changed, she told her fellow classmates during the Promo Pathway graduation ceremony on August 2, hosted by 21st Century Fox Global Inclusion at Fox Studios in Los Angeles.

"Today, I see I was avoiding whatever I was afraid of and looking for ways to get around that fear," she said. "This program is a manifestation of walking through my fears. Instead of looking for a way around, I went through the center. And because of that I have a new story to tell, and I stand before you today a changed woman. Today, I have hope and direction. I have been searching for my canvas to paint on and I stumbled upon that, to my joy and utter disbelief, here at Promo Pathway."

Dearen was one of 14 students who together constitute the sixth cohort to complete the one-year certificate program, hosted by PromaxBDA and Santa Monica College, that immerses students from diverse ethnicities and backgrounds in television marketing with hands-on curriculum, creative

coaching and valuable connections that provide real-world experience to help them launch their careers as writers, editors and producers in the entertainment industry.

The student's final project reels are testaments to their newfound skills. The next cohort of students will start this week.

#### Promo Pathway Class of 2018 E-book

Dearen commended Promo Pathway's tough instructors, the challenging assignments and the relief she would feel when editing instructor Walt Louie, in his zip-up hoodie, bestowed her with a compliment.

"We were all striving to hear his praise and it sounded like this 'â€!good,'" she joked.

But one of the most valuable components of the program were her fellow graduates who participated alongside her.

"My original thinking was that I was here to learn, not to make personal connections," Dearen said. "However, it was these personal connections that carried me through. These personal connections put a mirror in front of me, forcing me to learn and grow."

Nikole Larson, her wife and fellow graduate, was also her rock throughout the 12-month course.

"Here's the truth: I wanted to quit every day," she said. "â€!Everyday, Nikole said, 'We are doing this to be better, not to be perfect.' That was the story I had to tell myself to make it through."

Promo Pathway stresses the importance of story â€! "the ominous, vague, enigmatic, mystical story" â€! and now, driving to her new internship, Dearen is continuing to create hers.

As her old story came back: "They've made a huge mistake. You're a fraud. You're not worthy of this," she passed a wall where someone painted the quote "the present insists that you believe in yourself."

"And that is exactly what we did," she told her classmates. "We believed in ourselves. We had confidence and courage and hope for a better future. That is our story."

For more information about Promo Pathway please contact Rachel Wyatt at [rachel.wyatt@promaxbda.org](mailto:rachel.wyatt@promaxbda.org).

â€Promo Pathway is made possible by the generous support of the Santa Monica College Foundation and the Leadership Through Diversity Partners: