



## Class of 2012

**Sarrie Bailey**  
**Certificate**  
**Human Services Specialist**

**Dean's List**  
**PCCC Student Ambassador**

***An Education at PCCC Helped Her To Turn Her Life Around.***

Sarrie Bailey is a woman of strong faith. "I know there is a God," she said. "I couldn't have done what I did otherwise."

For 17 years of her adult life, Sarrie was incarcerated for drug dealing. This week, she will graduate from PCCC with her certificate in Human Services to be a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor. She has been on the Dean's List twice and plans to continue her education at a four-year college for a degree.

"My goal is to one day be the director of a drug facility," she explained, motivated by the desire to help others who suffer from drug addiction and abuse as she once did.

Twenty years ago, Sarrie could not have conceived of ever going to college. She had dropped out of Camden High School in tenth grade. "I thought school wasn't for me anymore," she said. She became pregnant at age 18 and gave birth to her son, Sa-Rhon.

At one point, she enrolled in computer classes at Camden County, but dropped out of that, too. "I just didn't have the patience for it at the time," she said. Working only odd jobs and struggling, she became drug user and later a dealer. "I made my money that way," she said. As a result, she landed in prison. "It was hell," she said of that period in her life.

When she was released in 2008, Sarrie entered a halfway house in Paterson and was able to attend college at PCCC. “I started as a part-time student, because I was scared of failure,” she explained.

Sarrie started classes at the developmental level and soon found herself succeeding. “It felt wonderful when I made the Dean’s List,” she said. “I called everyone I knew...there weren’t enough people for me to call.”

### **Close-Knit Family Saw Its Share of Tragedy**

Growing up in Camden with her mother, father, grandmother and eight siblings, Sarrie described a lively close-knit, church-going family. “I was very close to my grandmother,” she recalled. “My grandmother always wanted a good education for all of us.”

The family saw its share of tragedy when one of Sarrie’s sisters died young from diabetes and a brother was murdered in 1996. Sarrie also witnessed the negative effects of drug use when some of her neighborhood friends died from overdosing. Then, she became involved, too, and her life spiraled downward. “I never lost my faith in God,” she says. “Even when I was doing drugs and selling drugs...even in prison, I had faith.”

While Sarrie was in prison, her son, whom she calls “my pride and joy” was raised by his father’s family. It was her grandmother, now deceased, who kept Sarrie strong through her incarceration. “She believed in me.”

### **PCCC Was A Second Family to Her**

She found that kind of support again at PCCC. “This college is great, remarkable, fantastic,” said Sarrie. “It’s like a family here. They help you navigate and open doors for you.”

She is particularly grateful to Dawn Norman of EOF (Educational Opportunity Fund), for directing her to the EOF tutoring lab. “That lab is what got me on the Dean’s List,” she said. Sarrie called Dr. Steven Rose “an excellent college president” and said “Dean (William) Morrison is one of the best people I met here. They all listen and have concern for students.”

Her favorite subjects were sociology and psychology. “They gave me a broader outlook on life and taught me things I didn’t know about myself,” said Sarrie, who said Professor Moseley’s explanation of schizophrenia gave her a new

perspective on the disorder. "I have a nephew who is diagnosed with schizophrenia, and I see it not as a disease, but as a behavior people have to learn to deal with."

Reflecting on how far she has come and her career goal, Sarrie said, "Professor Moseley and Professor (Michael) D'Arcangelo (Human Services Department) made me what I am today."

Sarrie is proud of herself, and of her son, now 22, who is a cosmetologist and beauty specialist planning to establish his own business. She, herself, has several job interviews scheduled for the week after graduation.

Grateful for the opportunity to turn her life around, Sarrie has gained insight about her past, particularly her incarceration. "I realized that using drugs was the real prison, I was my own prison," she said.

Drawn to a career as an addiction counselor, as a way of giving back for what she has received, Sarrie said, "People need people. People were there for me when I needed help, so I want to be there for others and tell them that there's always hope."