When Marlene Espinal dons her cap and gown for graduation in May, it will be the culmination of a 17-year journey toward a college degree. “I finally feel a sense of accomplishment,” said the North Haledon resident who earned her Associate in Applied Science degree in Accounting and graduates with a 3.5 grade point average.

Marlee is the latest PCCC student to complete her degree through the DARC program for adults who previously attended college, but did not finish their degree. “It was an excellent program that helped me so much,” said Marlee.

A graduate of Passaic High School, Marlene first enrolled in PCCC in 1993. She was a single parent and also held a job as a bookkeeper. However, when her daughter started school, Marlee found college too demanding. “I put my education on hold,” she explained. She returned to PCCC in 2001, but withdrew three years later, again due to family concerns.

In 2009, shortly after she was laid off from her bookkeeping job with a gourmet food company, Marlee received a call from Joan Meeh, student development specialist of the DARC program at PCCC. “Joan encouraged me to return and complete my degree,” said Marlee. “It was just the right time. I wasn’t working, my daughter was grown, and I was helped by the unemployment tuition waver program.”

As a full-time student, Marlee completed her degree last December and is now looking for a new job in the accounting field. “Marlee was a very conscientious student here at PCCC, said Meeh. “We know she will succeed in today’s job market, and we wish her success in her future career endeavors.” As for the 17-year journey to that degree, Marlee smiles, “Better late than never.”

Have some college credits, but never completed your degree? Find out more about the DARC program at PCCC!