Finish your degree for new start in '13

As we begin another new year with thoughts of resolutions, hopes and dreams, many of us turn our attention to going back to college to finish a degree. Because Indiana is home to 740,000 adults with some college experience but no degree, I'm guessing many of you might be weighing this decision or know someone who is. No matter your background, now is the time for a clean start in 2013.

I did it, and so can you.

Imagine a boy born to parents living in poverty with education levels no higher than the eighth grade. Imagine him at 10 years old, visiting two brothers in prison twice a year, having no father figure in the household for guidance and making enemies faster than friends just because he talked differently. Imagine him at 14, living with his friend's family rather than his own; at 16, working in roofing to pay for rent and other bills; and at 17, dropping out of high school to work construction and maintenance.

Fast forward and imagine him at 25 years old with no job, no money, no direction, no purpose, no support, no future and no resources to change the situation. Sound familiar? Well, in past years, the life you just imagined was my excuse for every failure I allowed to happen.

In 2008, those excuses stopped and I decided to take control of my own future. I enrolled in community college, and in June 2010 I graduated with two associate degrees. That same year I enrolled in WGU Indiana and 18 months later I completed a bachelor's degree in accounting. Just 26 days later I enrolled in WGU Indiana again, this time to earn my MBA. Make no mistake about it - I am living proof that earning your college degree means a clean start.

In fact, an education not only helps you earn a promotion or land that dream job, but it helps everyone around you. An education can allow you, your family, and your future descendants to escape poverty, become productive members of society, and live out hopes, dreams and aspirations to the fullest.

Let's use the dawning of another new year to commit to changing our lives for the better. Let's support those weighing the decision to finally earn their diploma by letting them know it's never too late for a clean start.

Warren Guess Richmond

Take a stand

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