

Saints STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Making good use of opportunity

It takes two phones for T.J. King to keep track of everything he juggles daily. A current Liberal High School senior, he also takes a full load of courses at Seward County Community College, operates a small computer/tech repair business and occasionally takes on contractor projects. He also co-hosts the SCCC student podcast Louie@Noon.

Not bad for a guy who just turned 18. King credits his grandmother, Annette Montgomery, for sparking his ambition and confidence as a child.

“It’s definitely the encouragement she provided,” he said. “She has always said she wants me to do better than her, than my parents. I know that if I keep my head steady, I can 100 percent make it.”

Although changing generational patterns might feel like a burden to some, King said he bought into his grandma’s belief in his own potential at around age 11. “Growing up, I saw my family go through a lot of struggles, and I felt kind of desperate, like, ‘I just can’t live like

that,’ and that turned into, ‘No, that’s not for me,’ and that turned into, ‘I’m going to work so that I make it impossible to fail.’”

King found further inspiration in his older sister, Alana. The siblings are “very close,” T.J. said. “Seeing how she doesn’t put limits on herself, I know I shouldn’t either.”

When SCCC computer instructor Ed Hall suggested King earn a certificate, Joel Plummer, the SCCC-Liberal High School liaison, encouraged him. Even so, “a lot of people didn’t think it was possible, and some even tried to stop me,” he said. “But I had people fighting for me, and I believed I could do it.”

That’s how King, then a junior in high school, earned his certificate in computer information systems, walking the stage to graduate from SCCC last May.

“It was an eye-opening moment,” he said. Despite the outside voices that had expressed doubt, and the challenges of keeping up with his obligations, “I did it!”

T.J. ‘Itavice’ King

Age: 18, LHS Senior

Hometown: Liberal, Kan.

Major: Computer Information Systems, with a side of CDL

High points at SCCC:

- When I started classes with Ed Hall. He saw something in me, and pushed me to graduate. That’s when I really started to believe I could do this.

- Meeting Karla Morales (executive assistant to) President Bennett, and David (Hardman, VP of Student Affairs). They were

In his own words:

“None of this would be possible without God and my grandma.”

all so friendly and welcoming, and that really made a difference and created a comfort level here.

Clubs & Hobbies:

- HALO
- Black Student Union
- Co-hosts of the Louie@Noon podcast for SCCC
- Not a hobby but I have a small

business doing computer and tech repairs, and some general contractor jobs on a case-by-case basis. I’ve been doing that since I was 13, when Randy Harlety took an interest in me and I kind of apprenticed with him.

Looking forward to:

- In spring semester, I’m taking the CDL and finishing my associate’s degree.
- Next fall, I’ll be driving and taking online classes through Fort Hays State University.

Career Goal: Something in the tech field. Based on my life so far, it is hard to predict.