

# Spring 2017 grad conquers 20-year cycle of destruction

***Adrian Touchstone joined Honors Program and maintained 4.0 GPA during college career***

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BAYTOWN, TX — Before he was a Lee College Hall of Fame inductee and Honors Program student with a 4.0 GPA and mission to make a difference, Spring 2017 graduate Adrian Touchstone was stuck in a pattern of drugs, crime, and incarceration.

It was during yet another stint behind bars that Touchstone finally realized that breaking the destructive cycle and starting down the path to higher education and a more purposeful life would require two major changes to his self-awareness and perspective. First, he had to take full responsibility for himself, his thoughts and his actions instead of blaming other people or difficult circumstances. Second, he had to embrace selflessness instead of the selfishness that had long defined him.

“From the time I was 20 until now, I was trying to figure out how to do the wrong thing, the right way,” said Touchstone, 43, who received an Associate of Applied Science degree in Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counseling at the 2017 Lee College Spring Commencement. He credits his family and loved ones for being supportive despite the odds he faced.

“Taking responsibility gives you power,” Touchstone said. “I started wanting to bring something to life instead of taking out of it. My way of thinking changed to doing the right thing, the right way. I’m taking my stumbling blocks and making them stepping stones.”

Studying to become an addiction counselor fit his new plan perfectly; he could go out into the community and help others conquer the demon of drug abuse that he had one faced. After enrolling at Lee College and starting the program with success, Touchstone earned acceptance into the Honors Program and realized that being two decades older than many of his peers was a strength and not the weakness he had first feared. Voicing his thoughts and listening to his classmates’ views in “The Human Condition,” a unique seminar-style Honors course that emphasizes critical thinking and discussion, showed him how his past experiences could be used to share knowledge with and learn from others. He began to see society and himself through different lenses and felt his mind grow in unexpected directions.

Forging strong, personal connections with motivated and knowledgeable instructors and earning scholarships from the Lee College Foundation made Touchstone eager to give back to the institution. He became a Student Ambassador, completing 90 hours of service in each semester of his first year, and was active in the Drug-Free Campus Committee, the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act Advisory Committee and other organizations that emphasize serving and uplifting others.

With his Lee College journey coming to an end, Touchstone is more committed than ever to recreating a meaningful life. He hopes to pursue a bachelor’s degree at University of Houston Clear Lake, then a master’s, and plans to do his part to positively impact others and make the world a better place. Being recognized by Lee College for

his hard work inside and outside the classroom reminds him that making responsibility and selflessness a part of his mind-set has been more than worth the effort; in fact, it has literally made the difference between life and death.

“When I started I had no idea where I would be at this point in my life. God was working,” Touchstone said. “I try to be better person every day so I can give God something to work with when He calls me. I want to give people hope and encouragement because there is always something new over the horizon. It’s never too late to start a new journey in life. Lee College is an opportunity to start a new path, follow a new dream and have a new ending. I’ve found myself in many different ways and places every day.”