

Spotlight on NAU Graduate Richard Parry:

A Story About Perseverance, Kindness and a Bike



“A guy that’s never made excuses. No matter the obstacle, he always seen the goal,” James Holland said of student Richard Parry.

Parry’s journey is a sometimes common occurrence for National American University students. However, Parry, never let anything get in his way.

Parry started college after his roommate, Don Mo, suddenly died of cancer. He was only 62.

“I’m kind of doing it for him [Mo],” Richard Parry said. Parry is a NAU Wichita East student who graduated this fall with his A.A.S. in Business Administration.

“My friend took me in and helped me out when I needed it. I was there to help him while he was suffering,” Parry said.

The loss alone was hard enough on Parry, but now he needed to find somewhere to stay. “I was homeless for a while,” recalls Parry.

Academic Dean Michael Cole said, “You know when someone lives in a van down by the river, he didn’t even have the van, it was just him. And he still came to school!”

That is when his life changed for the better. “I was applying online for jobs and got a call from Monique Mason at NAU. She enrolled me in school and I got started. She was very helpful,” said Parry.

Going to school and struggling with finding somewhere to live, Parry has maintained a 3.5 GPA as well as attended every one of his classes.

“If I don’t try, I get a B, if I do try I get an A,” Parry said.

His most influential teacher was Dennis Ramey who teaches economics at NAU. “He engaged me in conversation about economics. Made me think about the real life aspect.”

With his focus on education, another obstacle hit Parry a year ago when his bike was stolen from the Wichita Campus. Since that was Parry’s main form of transportation, he would then walk from downtown Wichita to class on the east side of town, 10 miles.

“Once it was 105 degrees. It was really hot,” Parry said. When asked about other forms of transportation he said, “Buses are unreliable in town. So I take the foot express.”

On Friday, April 19th, Parry was presented with a new mountain bike from NAU for his dedication to education and upcoming graduation. After a standing ovation Parry asked to go finish his homework and study with his new bike, which will have a permanent parking space reserved inside the front office for him.

