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MOTHER AND SON SIT SIDE-BY-SIDE IN CLASS

JAMESTOWN – Mother and son Sylvia Russ and Justin Phillips sit side-by-side in an evening economics class at Guilford Technical Community College.

Both have day jobs but think a college degree will help them reach their goals in life. “I went to work right out of high school,” Russ said. “I decided last year that I’d go to college. Nobody pushed me to do it; it’s something I wanted to do.”

Russ, 51, of Greensboro, has worked for the same company for 26 years.

Phillips, 23, went to college briefly before joining the U.S. Army for a four-year hitch. Being discharged last year after a 15-month tour in Iraq, Phillips decided to enroll in GTCC’s two-year program that will allow him to transfer to a four-year school. He lives in McLeansville.

And they landed in the same class on Wednesday evenings. They are in the same break-out group in the class taught by adjunct instructor Curry Hilton.

“Our first time in class each student was told to introduce themselves, and tell a little about themselves,” Russ said. “I told about myself and my work but I didn’t say anything about my children,” she said.

“When it came Justin’s turn to tell about himself, he reached over and put his arm around me and said, ‘This is my mom.’ The class got a kick out of that.”

Both are graduates of Northeast High School, and both said they like their present jobs. Russ is employed by Graybar Electric; and Phillips works for Crossmark Co.

Phillips wants a career in marketing, and thinks he needs more education to advance with his company or another company.

“My intention is to specialize in studying taxes. Eventually, I’d like to have my own accounting company,” Russ said.

There is a possibility that they can graduate together in the class of 2010, Russ said.

“I’m very proud of him,” Russ said of her son’s decision to return to college

“I’m real proud of her too,” Phillips said.

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