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For Immediate Release

Emerge Scholarships Help Georgia Women Pursue College Education

ATLANTA (April 15, 2016) – It's taken Bonnie Johnson 33 years and overcoming many personal hurdles to finish her bachelor's degree in Business Administration. But this May, she will be a proud graduate of Kennesaw State University's Coles College of Business, as she walks across the stage to receive her hard-earned degree in Management.

Bonnie is one of seven women who received an academic scholarship last year from [Emerge](#), a Georgia non-profit organization founded in 2001 to provide scholarships to women whose education has been delayed or interrupted by life challenges. For more than a decade, EmERGE has empowered 100 women through education by providing more than \$500,000 in academic scholarships. One of the unique aspects of the award is it also seeks applicants who have given back to their communities.

Applications for 2016 awards are available until May 15, 2016. With Mother's Day around the corner, EmERGE is also seeking donors who would like to honor their mother with an EmERGE scholarship.

A single mother, Bonnie Johnson has a story of persistence and hard work.

She started her education in 1983, and received her associate's degree in 1985. But she was unable to continue her education due to several life challenges.

Bonnie attended school at KSU while working full time as an assistant administrator. The sole supporter of her two adult children with special needs -- her son has cerebral palsy and her daughter recently received a kidney transplant -- she also is a two-time cancer survivor.

Although her path has not always been easy, Bonnie has found a way to give back. She served as a captain for the American Cancer Society's Relay For Life team. She also served as coordinator for Junior Achievement and Habitat for Humanity and donated many volunteer hours through her work as Charitable Giving & Employee Services coordinator at a major corporate office in Atlanta. This was a role she created for herself at the company, in addition to her position as administrative assistant to the executive vice president of HR.

EmerGE awarded her a \$5,000 scholarship last year that helped her finish her education that also included taking out thousands of dollars in student loans.

“It was a financial burden that was lifted,” she said. “I could see the light at the end of the tunnel. I’ve always been a hard worker and have taken on 200 percent of what I’m capable of doing, but money was a stumbling block. It allowed me to finish in May rather than waiting until December or even next year.”

Jill Ratliff, co-president of Emerge and a senior human resources executive, said Bonnie “embodies resilience against all odds in life. It’s hard to make your way through when you have a full-time job, take care of kids and have health challenges.”

Ratliff hopes to raise awareness about the Emerge program so other women like Bonnie can take advantage of it.

“We all know people like Bonnie that have the commitment to learn and grow and better themselves. This is a way to help them accelerate their development and use their talents to help others.”

While Bonnie isn’t sure what her next step will be, she would like to work in Corporate Social Responsibility to give employees a sense of helping in their community, while also benefiting their company.

Said Bonnie: “I would really like to work in corporate social responsibility and charitable giving. I want to do things that will help engage employees to get involved, that puts them in the community, and have my company benefit from this involvement as well.”

About Emerge

Since 2001, Emerge, a Georgia non-profit organization, has empowered 100 women through education by providing more than \$500,000 in academic scholarships. These educational experiences, combined with encouragement and support provided by Emerge volunteers, give women the opportunity to advance professionally and become self-sufficient for not only themselves, but also for their families and communities.

Emerge supports Georgia women who have demonstrated a deep commitment to reaching their educational goals and give back to their communities. Through the scholarships granted, women are able to realize their dreams and generate ripples of change in the world. For more information about Emerge, please visit www.emergescholarships.org.