



The Casa Loma Pro

Coming up:

• Graduation!
6 p.m. Dec. 21 @
3901 W. El Segundo Blvd.
Hawthorne, CA 90250

• Medical Assistant Program
Dec. 17 @ Hawthorne

Medical Assistant Night Program
Jan. 7 @ Hawthorne

• Vocational Nurse Program
Jan. 2 @ Van Nuys & Hawthorne

“Olumide had excellent study habits and was very helpful to his peers.”

**-Ms. Marilyn Paxton-Kinkle
Level 3 VN Instructor,
Hawthorne Campus**



Olumide Ijshakin stands outside his home in Torrance, California.

Habitual Excellence: Casa Loma's 2012 Valedictorian

It's not easy to earn the title, "Valedictorian." A student has to possess a certain level of intelligence. But so does any student who wants to go into the field of healthcare. Once students have proven, through entrance exams, that they have enough smarts to tackle a program, the only thing that separates some students from others is their level of commitment to the program and willingness to struggle through it. They must do it every day, as though it becomes a habit of their daily lives.

In his exploration of the philosopher, Aristotle, American Historian Will Durant summarized a lesson from the philosopher by writing, "we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."

This is true for students who excel in the rigorous programs offered at Casa Loma College, and is most certainly true for Casa Loma College's 2012 Valedictorian and graduate of

the Hawthorne Campus' Vocational Nurse Program, Olumide Ijshakin.

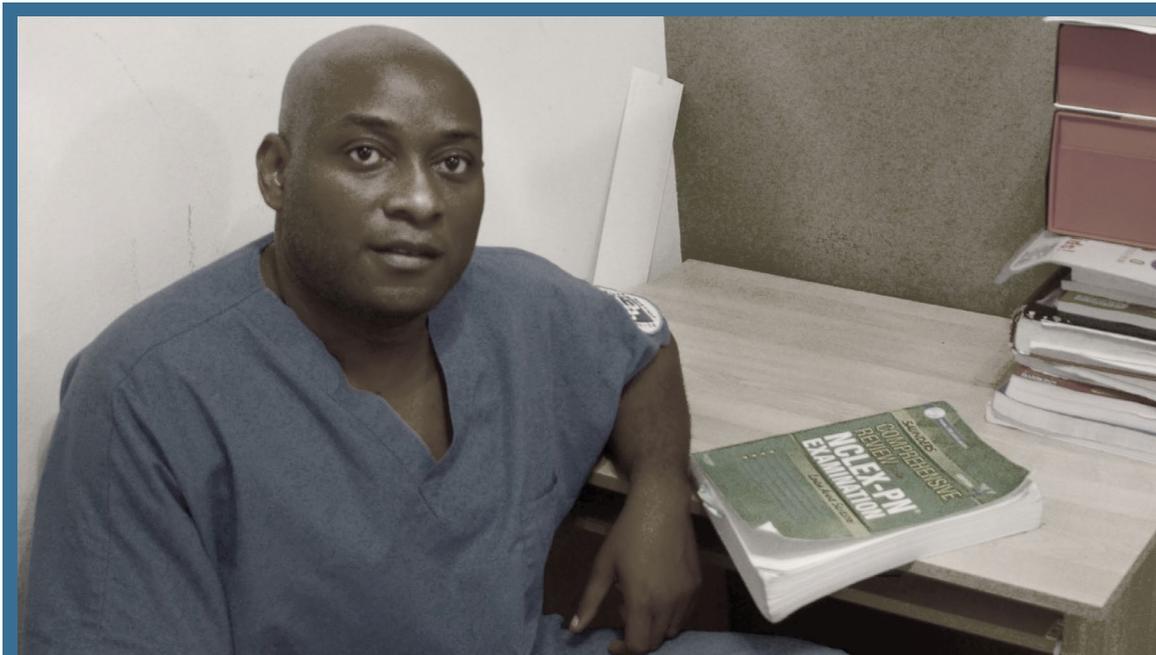
Olumide excelled in his endeavors as a student and an aspiring healthcare professional. But this pursuit of excellence isn't quarantined to just Casa Loma College. It's a habitual pursuit of excellence that he brings with him into every aspect of his life.

Olumide Ijshakin is a first-generation Nigerian-American immigrant, who earned his naturalization and is a Citizen of the United States. He's a personnel specialist in the U.S. Air Force, en route to becoming a commissioned officer and a physician's assistant in the same branch of military service. He's a loving husband, and a combat veteran. He is Casa Loma's Valedictorian – an academic status he achieved while also completing general education college classes on the side through DeVry University.

He conducts himself with a



Juan Martinez, the sole Custodial Engineer at the Van Nuys Campus, treats each task with the same attitude: "Not a problem!"



Casa Loma's Valedictorian, Olumide Ijishakin sits with his NCLEX study book. "A lot of it is a game of words, and you get that from the textbook," he said.

manner that communicates sincere gratitude and a reaching aspiration, and he treats each task and person as though they are of the utmost importance. He's incredibly driven and incredibly self-aware, letting his goals dictate who and what he needs to be each day.

"I want to succeed," he said. "I want to make it ... Big time."

At the age of 30, he won the DV (Diversity Visa) Lottery in Nigeria, an American Visa program that grants only 55,000 green cards each year to nations that are deemed to have low immigration levels to the U.S. This gave him his opportunity to come to America – his inch to get in. From this inch of opportunity, Olumide has already run miles.

"I was happy with the opportunity I was given to come to this country. I was ready to give my life. This country has really given me a lot," said Olumide.

He moved from Nigeria to Los Angeles, and within a year after arriving, Olumide had already committed himself to service in the United States Military.

"From my investigation, I found out that the Air Force was very difficult to get into," said Olumide.

But this level of difficulty only inspired him more to reach for it. He studied, and tested higher on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery than any other applicant in the recruiting station's testing center, ensuring his acceptance into the Air Force. From there, he used his service

to advance himself as a citizen and a professional, deploying to Afghanistan, and using the 9/11 G.I. Bill to help pay for his studies.

Olumide isn't coy about how he's succeeded in his schooling. He doesn't view it as a terribly complicated formula: he works hard, pushes himself to struggle and find new depths, studies daily, and uses the textbook.

"I read the text book a lot. A lot of people in class ask me how come I was always getting good grades, and I would show them," he said. "I take the text book out, because the text book doesn't beat around the bush with the material. With the textbook, you have a full understanding. Some people just focus on the handouts. I refer to the handouts when I am about to take a test, but I read the textbooks to really understand."

Of course, the textbook is accompanied by class time and diligent note taking.

"I never missed classes. That's very important – because if you miss a class, what comes out in that class – you can never get back," he said.

"Everything comes together, so if you miss a little bit out of it, that will affect you in the future. So I always went to class and took good notes that I could refer back to."

During the Vocational Nurse Program, the valedictorian's instructors took notice, not only of his excellent attendance and diligence in studying, but also of his willingness to help others.

"Olumide had excellent study

habits and was very helpful to his peers," said his Level 3 instructor, Ms. Marilyn Paxton-Kinkle. "It was a real pleasure to have him as a student." Olumide is quick to return the praise to his instructors and to his school because he's actually been able to apply his studies at the school to his interactions in the healthcare community.

"Casa Loma is a very good school. Everything I know about healthcare, I learned from there first," he said. "I've done some shadowing with physician assistants while trying to put my packet together (Air Force Officer Packet), and I felt comfortable. Some of them were surprised that I knew what I knew. And I told them, 'yes, I learned this at Casa Loma.'" So much credit is due to Olumide and his philosophy for success in the program; he keeps it simple, because he knows the material can be complicated.

"Study hard," he said. "My method was to read the textbook, and that's a good method. A lot of it is a game of words, and you get that from the textbook."

Olumide is sharp. But it's his struggle to be excellent in everything that's made him the outstanding student, service member and citizen that he is. It's struggle to be excellent in everything; a habit that he's created. Congratulations to Olumide Ijishakin, Casa Loma College's 2012 Valedictorian.

Another beautiful day with Juan

In the late morning, Oct. 18, 2012, students at Casa Loma's Van Nuys Campus were outside the building, having been evacuated for an earthquake safety drill. Each class stood in their respective areas, a little unsure of what was going to happen next or how long they would be waiting. The school Public Relations Representative announced to the students that he would be going back in to check the building for damages before the all-clear signal was given and everyone could return to class.

The representative then announced, "I'm going back in with Juan to check, because Juan knows more about our building than just about anybody."

At that, the students went wild. They cheered, clapped and shouted Juan's name repeatedly. The uproar of applause for Juan Martinez, the school's sole custodial engineer, went on for almost an entire minute before the two men returned to do the final sweep of the building.

Juan Martinez is something of a celebrity at Casa Loma College's Van Nuys Campus. He arrives before the students, greeting them as he sees them enter, and leaves after the students, bidding them a good evening as he sees them exit. But the fact that he's present isn't why the students and staff at Casa Loma love him so much. What they love is his presence, and what he represents.

Juan is the walking embodiment of the American Dream. He emigrated from Oaxaca, Mexico in 1987, reunited with his hometown sweetheart and began working in various jobs around LA. He's been a solid force in raising his three children, all of whom are largely successful in their endeavors, and one of whom is now an adult and fulfilling her dream of working with a respected Law Firm in Los Angeles. All the while, he's kept his work and family life strong. None of this has been easy, and all of it has involved a serious level of commitment and work. But Juan has managed to wake up every day and do it with a smile and a contagiously positive attitude.

"You don't find too many guys like Juan," said Rebecca Roos-Steve, Casa Loma's Human Resources



Juan Martinez (center) poses for a photo at the front desk of Casa Loma's Van Nuys Campus with friends, Alex Gelfand (left), Maria Ortiz (right), and Kelly Kumar (bottom).

Director. "He doesn't just do an awesome job; he does it, and he does it with a smile. He's happy."

"That's one of the most important things for me is to be happy," said Juan. "When people see me happy, they feel that energy."

One of the reasons everyone at the school feels his energy is not just that he's happy. He's genuinely happy, and unabashedly honest about it. He's fond of greeting students in the morning because he feels good in the morning.

"I don't even know all their names, but I like to say good morning to all of them," he said. "I tell them, 'please don't tell me your name because I won't remember it.'"

Perhaps one of the reasons Juan loves the morning as much as he loves work is because he's used to them both.

"I just really like to work because I love that," he said. "My dad used to wake me up at five o' clock in the morning to go work in the fields, cutting the plants and bringing them home; mostly the hard jobs."

Juan worked in cornfields around Oaxaca with his father when he was young, which is where he grew his work ethic and propensity for hard jobs. It's also where he learned the value of a positive attitude.

"He would tell me, 'you have to work hard if you want something good, and you have to be a good person,'" said Juan. "And that's what I'm teaching my kids: whatever you want to do – do it. Work hard and be happy, and make it fun, you know? When you work hard and time goes

fast, it can even seem fun."

But Juan has shown that hard work, even if it's fun, also requires commitment. He's a committed Casa Loma employee and also a committed husband and father. He married his wife, Asunción in 1992, and they have worked together to raise three children. His two younger children are still in school. His oldest daughter, Reyna, is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, and now a case analyst for Romano-Stancroff PC in Los Angeles. Even though the family shares in each others' successes, Juan will be the first to acknowledge that it's not always easy.

"Marriage can be difficult, and I can say that loud," he said. "It's not easy. My wife and I have the same temper, but we learn day by day. We have difficult times, we have problems, but we face them."

Juan has continued to develop his joy for facing challenges with cheerful vigor, whether they are coming to a new country, starting a family, doing hard work, or working through differences with others, all because of a common reason: "In the end, it's worth it," he said.

At Casa Loma's Van Nuys Campus, Juan remains a local celebrity of the school, and an example of the attitude Casa Loma's instructors and students aspire to bring to our work. But to Juan, there's nothing incredibly complex about it.

"I love it," he said. "I can be here 24/7, but as soon as I get home, I have my family, so I feel blessed. Every morning I get up and go, 'Wow! Another beautiful day.'"

Casa Loma College

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Casa Loma
College

School of Nursing and Allied Health

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Do you have a story or know someone at school with a story that should be shared. Let us know and we'll work to get the story out to all of our communities.

Casa Loma College is committed to keeping you informed and using communications to enhance your educational and professional experiences.

For more information about using Casa Loma College's communication resources to help your education and career, or to give a tip on a potential story, contact:

Joe Roos 818.785.2726 X220 joe.roos@casalomacollege.edu

Medical Fast fact:

The brain operates on the same amount of power as 10-watt light bulb. The cartoon image of a light bulb over your head when a great thought occurs isn't too far off the mark. Your brain generates as much energy as a small light bulb even when you're sleeping.

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