

Career Tech Matters

by Dennis Franks • Dec. 4, 2020

Generally, students come to Pickaway-Ross as sophomores in the hope of finding a career lab that will match with their interests and skills. Sarah Deacon knew before setting foot on campus that Cosmetology was her calling.

Sarah completed that program in 2010 and is now the owner of Deacon Hair Co., which she opened in January 2019.



"From a very young age, I've always loved hair," Sarah said. "I can't pin it down to one certain time or memory but everything about hair has been mesmerizing to me."

Cindy James, a stylist and Pickaway-Ross alum, cut Sarah's hair on a few occasions.

"She cut my hair at a rate I could afford when I was a young teenager and she encouraged me to explore opportunities at Pickaway-Ross."

After high school, Sarah worked for five years at the salon where she had interned and then traveled, pursuing more advanced educational opportunities.

Upon returning to Chillicothe, she rented space downtown to cut and paint hair — a technique called *balayage* — and substitute taught at Pickaway-Ross. She credits Shirley Good, senior Cosmetology instructor at the time, Katt Marriott, junior instructor, and former English teacher Marianne Miele with instilling in her what she needed to be a successful stylist and business owner.

Shirley and Katt recall Sarah fondly.

"Sometimes students are the best teachers," Shirley said. "Sarah taught me a lot about life and resilience. Sarah stood proud with her manners, her gentle nature and a strong willingness to learn. She showed up and did the work — not just at school, but in her job outside of school."

Katt agreed that Sarah's work ethic was strong, calling her an amazing student and an intelligent young lady.

But even that work ethic couldn't prepare Sarah for operating a small business during a pandemic. Sarah



Photos by Cassidy Dawn Photography

Sarah Deacon works on a client's hair at her Chillicothe salon. Sarah completed the Cosmetology program in 2010 and opened her salon in January 2019.

said when salons were ordered to close by the end of the day on March 18, she felt as if a rug was pulled out from under her.

"COVID wasn't in any one of my million business plans, or any of the advice I'd gotten from my peers or mentors. No one, nada, nothing prepared me for this."

Sarah, who has a team of five at her shop at 123 Race Street, used the time that salons were closed to stay in touch with her team virtually and coordinate procedures to safely reopen.

Schedules were adjusted so that only three stylists were in the salon at a time, allowing an empty station between each stylist. She also wanted to be cognizant that clients, when they returned, might be undergoing their own financial, health and emotional struggles.

"We stuck together as a team," she said. "In the end, I think we became healthier."

Health is important to Sarah, not just on the surface but mentally and emotionally. Having overcome adversity from a young age, she has a dream with her husband, Deke, of creating a non-profit for vulnerable youth, to share the skills to grow into an adult, similar to her experience at Pickaway-Ross.

"I'm extremely passionate about helping high school students. It's such a critical age and many youth are lacking support for their future. College isn't an option for everyone. Without Pickaway-Ross, I can't imagine what my future would have been."

"I'm humbled and thankful every day, even on the hard days. I know chances like these don't come very often in life and I don't want to waste one moment of it."