



PHOTOS BY AMANDA THOMPSON  
Daisean Brown and  
instructor Darlene Almeda  
set up a shot in the Lively  
photography studio.

# SHOOTING FOR SUCCESS

## STUDENTS FIND FOCUS AT LIVELY PHOTO PROGRAM

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**A**shley DeFrank is a 12th-grader at Chiles High School. Every day, she leaves campus and travels to Lively Technical Center, where she is dually enrolled as a commercial photography student. "There were no more electives I wanted to take at my school and they told me about the program at Lively. There aren't many people who know it's an option."



Chiles student Ashley DeFrank is dually enrolled at Lively in the commercial photography program.

Though Lively's commercial photography program was a boon for Ashley, her true creative calling is TV production. Because of a scheduling mishap at Chiles

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# Lively

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three years ago, she found herself in a class focused on image and graphics programs. She was hooked.

Using animation and motion graphics software, Ashley creates original content that she uses in her role as Chiles' social media producer. "I like doing promos, almost commercial-like things," Ashley said. "I took this class at Lively because I thought it could help me with framing a shot and being more creative. I'm really grateful that I'm able to be here."

Since 1937, Lively Technical Center has provided workforce education. Lively is part of the Leon County School system and serves both teens and adults who are seeking vocational training and continuing education. A wide variety of programs are offered including culinary arts, digital design and multimedia design.

Darlene Almeda directs Lively's commercial photography program and she has great respect for her students, many of whom have children and jobs. Her main goal for those who complete her program is employment. "I had four graduates last semester and all four were employed within three months, including a 62-year-old woman."

"There's not another commercial photography program around. The closest one I know of is in Orlando," Almeda said. "Some students are specifically looking for commercial photography and there's another group of students who don't know what they want to do. This is offered as an option."

As a first-year student, Chelsea Starling is taking full advantage of the two-year program. After graduating from high school in 2012, she enrolled at TCC but wasn't able to focus or finish. Photography had always interested her, and she even had some semi-professional experience. After enrolling in the commercial photography program she's feeling "super confident."

"Being here I've learned a lot about exposure, the f-stops. Before, I had no idea what aperture meant, what bokeh meant. Bokeh is that blur in the background that everyone loves," Starling explained. "I'm doing shoots all the time now and I'm getting really good feedback. It makes me feel professional."

Daisean Brown is a second-year student in the program and he has also learned about the complexities of the medium. "I have to make sure I have the technical part down. You can't really be an artist unless you know the craft. You have to know how to create the picture. I create the art from the craft."

His commitment and artistry has garnered a positive response and Brown finds motivation from the



AMANDA THOMPSON

Daisean Brown gets instruction from his photography teacher Darlene Almeda.

attention he's getting. "I love how people are talking about me and the work I'm producing. It's nice to hear that you're doing good, when you're doing good. The teacher brags on me and I feel great about that. I feel like I'm worth something, worth a lot, because I am. I feel like I'm wanted. I didn't know you could make people this happy."

After completing the program, Brown envisions a creative career path but admits that it will take careful planning. "The business aspect is going to be challenging and I'll have to take it one step at a time. A lot of people mess up when they don't work at a pace, they rush everything. I'm not that type."

That's an area where Almeda is eager to assist. "Before students graduate, they do job interviews with me, we get their portfolio done, they learn framing, cutting mats and everything. I teach them how to retouch old, damaged photos. There's a whole lot more involved in commercial photography than just a trigger. There's lighting, understanding business, how to bid on a job, how to explain and educate your client on what they need. There's a lot to it."

If anyone knows the ins and outs of the business, it's Almeda. "I was a comp artist, that's somebody who comes up with the idea for the ad, sketches it out real quick, and then the account executive sells it. So they were hiring the photographers to come take my idea, reproduce it and get paid five times the money. I said, 'What am I doing here?' I made the transition to photography and I have never looked back."

For more than 30 years, Almeda has worked as a commercial and fine art photographer as well as an educator and lifelong student. She believes "if you want to change your situation in life, I don't care



where you come from, the only proven thing I have seen that does it is education. Lively is a place where, if someone is ready to make a change in their life, if they come into photography and they say, 'Here I am,' I'll say, 'Well, you have arrived, let's go.'"

Amanda Karioth Thompson is the education and exhibitions director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).

## NOTICE TO PATIENTS OF SUSAN MCGILL CROSS, M.D.

Dr. Cross announces that she will be retiring from the practice of pediatrics as of 12/30/2016.

Her patients at Tallahassee Pediatrics/TPCA are welcome to continue their care with her partners in that practice, Dr. Charles Long, Dr. Kate Simmons,

Dr. Raquel Mitchell, Dr. Abby Peters and Mona Antley, ARNP. If medical records are required, they are available upon written request at Tallahassee Pediatrics, 1205 Marion Ave, Tallahassee FL. 32303;

Telephone: 850-681-3887.

Her patients at Children's Medical Services are welcome to continue their care with Dr. D. Paul Robinson and Norine Labitzke, ARNP, her colleagues at the Behavior Clinic. If medical records are required,

they are available on written request at Children's Medical Services, 2390 Phillips Road, Tallahassee, FL. 32308; Telephone: 850-487-2604.

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