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Motivational Speaker Tawana Williams Inspired Audience

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C – The Dimensions Program at Gardner-Webb welcomed nationally acclaimed motivational speaker Tawana Williams as guest for the University's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. service. The program took place Tuesday, Jan. 22 at 9:25 a.m in the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center's Paul Porter Arena. 

Born without arms and impaired use of her legs, Williams' compelling life story explains her will to overcome the anguish of physical defect, drug addiction, and the shame of abuse and rape.

Williams, 49, a self-proclaimed "messenger of hope & inspiration," captivated the attention of hundreds of Gardner-Webb students, faculty, staff, and community members with an abundance of energy, joy, and occasional lighthearted humor. Williams's story showcased the strength of will power and challenged all in attendance to believe in themselves, and go after their dreams.

"If I did it without arms, what's your excuse?" Williams said. Her "no-excuses" approach to achieving goals starts with believing in yourself and allowing things to happen, she said.

The challenges life has thrown at Williams have helped her to develop a list of guidelines to tackle adversity and achieve greatness. These guidelines include changing your mindset, changing your relationships, and ultimately being confident in yourself.

Williams made sure to note principles she had learned from her mentor, world-renowned speaker Les Brown. "He once told me, 'if you are the richest and smartest one in your circle, then you need to change your circle,'" she shared.

Williams ended her speech by demonstrating the tasks she learned to perform with her feet: changing her baby's diaper, bottle-feeding her daughter, and sketching a variety of artistic pieces. After showing the audience her skills, Williams exclaimed with a huge grin on her face, "That's right... I'm da bomb!"

For her entire life, Williams has been told that her physical conditions would hold her back, yet she continues to beat the odds. "My grandmother told me, 'T, if God didn't give you arms, then you must not need them,'" she said.

Students were inspired by Williams' personal testimony and achievements. "The thought of not being able to hold your child moved me," said Sarah Gilbert, a sophomore elementary education major. "I was amazed to see the way she learned to perform daily activities."

Dr. Tracy Jessup, vice president of Christian Life and Service and senior minister at Gardner-Webb said, "If students can take one thing away from this experience, it would be no excuses. God has given you the tools you need."

More information on Tawana Williams is available at <http://www.tawanawilliams.com>

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University seeks a higher ground in higher education- one that embraces faith and intellectual freedom, balances conviction with compassion, and inspires in students a love of learning, service, and leadership.