

Southeastern Technical College Pins 2025 Dental Hygiene Graduates

Southeastern Technical College celebrated its 2025 Dental Hygiene Associate of Applied Science Degree graduates during a pinning ceremony held on the Vidalia Campus on July 28, 2025.

The graduates honored were Ansley Cook of Bulloch County, Etta Key of Emanuel County, Carter Lastinger of Appling County, and Sydni Youmans of Jeff Davis County.

Dental Hygiene Program Director Dr. Griffin Mizell welcomed family, friends, and faculty in attendance, congratulating the graduates on their accomplishments. "Congratulations, Class of 2025. We honor your past, celebrate your present, and embrace your future. We thank you for allowing Southeastern Technical College to be part of your journey. We are so proud of you!" Mizell said.

The graduates were pinned by their instructors: Mrs. Lori DeFore, Ms. Arielle White, and Mrs. Brandy Spell.

The ceremony included presentations of program-related awards and honors.

Ansley Cook received the *Dr. James Cameron Brown, D.M.D. Periodontal Clinical Excellence Award*. She held the highest cumulative average for full-mouth periodontal debridement services during the four semesters of live-patient clinical education.

"Becoming a graduate of STC's Dental Hygiene Program is more than just a milestone; it symbolizes perseverance, support, and

purpose. Despite the unexpected challenges, I am deeply grateful for the faculty and staff who stepped up and stood by us, making sure our class could cross the finish line,” said Cook. “All the countless hours of studying, practicing, and pushing through were worth it. To officially call myself a graduate of STC means everything; it’s proof that even in the toughest times, with the right people beside you, success is still within reach.”

The National Network of Healthcare Hygienists, a professional organization that promotes an oral-systemic wellness approach beyond dental health alone, annually recognizes one graduate with the title of *Oral Systemic Educator*. This year, Cook received the honor.

Carter Lastinger was honored with the *Dental Hygiene Oral Radiography Award*, awarded to the senior who demonstrated exceptional clinical radiography skills and who achieved the highest overall average in the final oral radiograph clinic. She also received the *Colgate STAR (Student Total Achievement Recognition) Award* for remarkable improvement in self-discipline, self-confidence, and organizational and clinical skills.

Lastinger shared, “Graduating from STC’s Dental Hygiene Program will forever be one of my greatest accomplishments – because I know I earned it and it changed me for the better. The program shaped me into someone stronger, more capable, and more confident. I started this journey with a full heart and a constant prayer that if this were God’s plan for me, He would make a way – and He did. This program taught me so much more than just dental hygiene. It taught me discipline, responsibility, time management, and how to keep showing up. I’m especially grateful for my instructors who gave me a kind of confidence I had never known before.”

Etta Key was awarded the *Peer Recognition Award* for resilience and strength for demonstrating unwavering perseverance, courage, and a positive spirit when facing challenges. She noted, "Having access to a clinic at the college provides essential services to the community while giving students invaluable learning opportunities."

The Oral Health Education Award was presented to Sydni Youmans as the student who demonstrated excellence while educating patients on proper oral hygiene techniques and exemplified enthusiasm and concern when relating oral health to systemic health during patient care.

The HuFriedy Golden Scaler Award was earned by Cook for outstanding clinical skills, academic excellence, and professionalism with patients, fellow students, faculty, and staff.

For the first time at Southeastern Technical College, the Educators Platform awarded a scholarship to a graduate who expressed interest in becoming a future educator. This scholarship provides access to a live, virtual conference on clinical teaching and recognizes the recipient's commitment to incorporating education into their clinical journey. The scholarship was presented to Cook.

Cook and Youmans were recognized for their dedication and commitment to having perfect attendance throughout the program.

Pictured (Front Row L-R): Dental Hygiene Graduates Etta Key, Ansley Cook, Carter Lastinger, and Sydni Youmans (Back Row L-R): Dental Hygiene Administrative Assistant Amanda Helms, Instructor Arielle White, Program Director Dr. Griffin Mizell, Instructor Lori DeFore, and Clinical Coordinator Brandy Spell

