



Thomas Hiott

For Thomas Hiott, the Middle College program at Forsyth Tech has been a life-saver. Suffering from depression after his best friend died in middle school, the Lewisville teenager had pretty much given up. He often didn't show up at school, and when he did, "I never felt welcome. Nobody talked to me; the teachers really couldn't help me because I just wasn't in the right frame of mind. I was depressed about my whole life."

Thomas was particularly upset about his future. He had no idea what he was going to do about college. "My brother was a straight-A student; he took AP classes and got a full ride to NC State. I envied people who were getting good grades in high school. Everybody told me high school is the best time of your life, but it's probably been the worst time of my life so far."

Things began to turn around for Thomas when the family doctor suggested he look into the Middle College program. He decided to give it a try and the 17-year-old junior finally found himself in a place that worked for him. "It's for people like me who just don't fit in at a high school," he observes. "Everybody here is just very chill and laid back. The classes are small. Having that individual attention – I can talk to the teacher by myself – it's so much better than listening to 30 kids talking about nothing."

A self-described science geek (he'd like a career in medicine) who never did well in English, Thomas can't say enough about his English teacher at Forsyth Tech. "She's the best teacher I've ever had in my life. I've learned more in a month from her than I have in my whole life from any other teacher."

When he talks to his old friends, he says, "They all say it sounds awesome."

"I've made friends here; there's no drama, no cliques. Everybody is who they are and everybody accepts everybody. It's literally changed my life around. I used to think I'd never be anybody. Now I wake up and I want to go to school. I want to learn things and be successful."