





HOLLYWOOD — Kaitlynn Osceola juggles the diverse aspects of her life with confidence. As a freshman at Broward College, she studies early education; as an athlete, she plays an integral part of the school's Seahawks basketball team; as a mother, she inspires her young daughter.

Osceola, 18, is driven by her love of basketball and her ambition to become a special education teacher. Her aspiration stems from witnessing her special needs cousin earn a kindergarten diploma.

"The smile on her face made me real passionate," said Osceola, who grew up in Anadarko, Okla. and now calls the Hollywood Reservation home. "From that moment I knew I wanted to help little kids with special needs."

After enrolling in Broward College in the fall, she contacted the basketball coach and made the team as a walk-on guard.

"Kaitlynn is a hustle player and brings extra energy to the team," said head coach Arlande Cherizol. "She knocks down shots and plays good defense; she has a lot of potential. She works hard and her work ethic will take her a lot of places."

Osceola enjoys playing ball while earning a degree but struggles with the amount of time academics and athletics take away from family. Many days include classes, studying and practice, leaving her little time with her boyfriend, Jose Hernandez, and their daughter, Jaselynn, 2.

"Sometimes when I get home from practice, she is asleep," Osceola said. "Once I do get time off, I'm excited to spend my time with them."

Although the schedule is demanding, Osceola perseveres in hopes of acting as a role model for her daughter. She looks forward to earning a bachelor's degree - and possibly a master's - and embarking on a rewarding career. The support she receives from her father, Curtis Osceola Sr., mother, Tera Tartsah, and seven brothers and sisters, keeps her going, she said. Her brother Jarrid Smith, who teaches at Ahfachkee School in Big Cypress, inspires her to continue.

"My family really does give me a lot of support," Osceola said. "They have pushed me to stay on top of what I want to do. When my daughter grows up, I want her to say I was her inspiration."

She encourages other students or potential students to persevere.

"Just never give up when it gets hard," she said. "Don't ever let anyone get you down. Keep pushing forward, never give up and always say you can do it."

Please follow and like us:

