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08/13/2004

17 Year Degree Well Deserved

For some it takes four years, others a little longer, but graduation is a momentous occasion no matter how long it takes.

Michael Bonafede's degree took him 17 years.

Bonafede means "good faith" and that's what it took for Michael Bonafede to get his diploma.

"I was kicked out of school in '91 for bad grades. The university was nice enough to let me come back in 2000. I was on scholastic probation for four years," Bonafede said.

And as if that wasn't enough, there's another twist to Michael's story.

"I never told my parents I went back to school. I flew them out here on some bogus, fake awards ceremony for my company. I surprised them with the announcement I was actually graduating," Bonafede said.

"We're so proud of Michael, we have been all these years. He started his company all on his own and the fact that he went back to school without telling us -- it was an awesome surprise, just completely awesome," Mom, Marcia said.

Keeping the secret was tough enough, but classes the second time around wasn't a breeze either.

"Even now I don't have great study habits but I just took it a little bit at a time and got through it. And if you just put your mind on it -- you can do anything," Bonafede said.

And the reward is sweet.

"This is an awesome year for us -- we're having our 40th anniversary in 2 months. Nice anniversary present! Sure is!," Father, Mario said.

Lindsay Liepman Newstar Three

Lindsay Liepman

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