

# Capping moment for dad and son

BY LAURA BLASEY

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When Jeffrey Hudson watches his son graduate from Suffolk County Community College today, he will have one of the best seats in the house.

That's because Hudson, 57, will be a fellow graduate, a milestone for the man whose education plans were derailed years ago by drug and alcohol addiction.

For Hudson, of Amityville, his new associate degree in chemical dependency counseling is a chance at the career he always wanted. The graduation also marks how far he and his youngest son Isaiah Bright, 22, of Amityville, have come in repairing the damage addiction caused in their relationship.

"For him to go and finish with me, it means a lot," Bright said.

In 1985, Hudson, a Navy veteran, had been at work counseling other veterans when he got into a dispute with a patient, who then stabbed him as they fought. He lost his job after the incident and he turned to drinking.

After his two sons were born, the pressure mounted and he turned to marijuana, co-

caine and eventually heroin. He tried several times to get clean between drug arrests, but by the mid-2000s, Hudson said, he was homeless and out of touch with his family.

"There was something in me that knew I could do better, that I didn't want to live that way," he said. "I tried one more time."

Six years ago, he sought help from Veterans Affairs to turn his life around. He started going to church, attending support group meetings, and got an apartment. He also started communicating with Bright again.

With encouragement from the Council on Thought and Actions, a Long Island rehabilitation program, he headed back to school for a degree in counseling.

"We have a saying in COTA — obstacles make us faster, stronger and wiser, and I think that's true for Jeffrey," said COTA director Risco Mention-Lewis.

Mention-Lewis said Hudson had joined the program in its early days, looking to turn his life around. He told her that he wanted to learn job skills and that he hoped have a relationship with his sons again, she said. "Now it's amazing to see

their relationship is so strong," she said.

Bright hadn't initially intended to go to college with his father. Hoping a degree in criminal justice would help him become a police officer, he enrolled shortly after Hudson did.

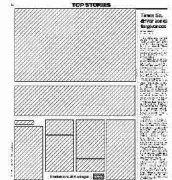
Though they studied in different programs, they still navigated the challenges of adjusting to college together.

"Me and him haven't always seen eye to eye," Bright said. "For us to go as father and son and make this experience better, it's even more special [to be graduating]."

Bright and Hudson both want to use their careers to help others. Bright hopes to attend LIU Post and become a Suffolk County police officer. Hudson hopes to move on to a bachelor's degree in social work and move to Las Vegas, where his other son and two grandsons live.

For now, Hudson said he is just excited to put on a cap and gown.

"I want to be an example for my sons and for men who are struggling," he said. "The whole journey is just beautiful."





JOHNNY MILANO

Isaiah Bright, left, and dad Jeffrey Hudson graduate today from Suffolk County Community College in Brentwood. ■ Grad photos: [newsday.com/li](http://newsday.com/li)