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## In the Spotlight: Melody (Johnson) Bradley '11

Melody (Johnson) Bradley '11 received her bachelor's degree in creative writing and psychology and has found success as a published paranormal romance author and the coordinator for digital media at Southeast Georgia Health System.



### 1. What made you choose to attend Lycoming College?

I was looking for a tight-knit, liberal arts college that had strong creative writing, music and swim programs. After my first college visit, seeing the campus and meeting Dr. G.W. Hawkes (creative writing professor), Jerry Hammaker (swim coach) and Dr. William Ciabattari (band director), I knew that Lycoming would be more than just a college. It would be my second home where I could grow my skills and become the person I aspired to be.

### 2. What is one of your favorite memories, classes, professors or activities while attending Lycoming College as an undergraduate student?

My time at Lycoming is filled with so many wonderful memories and experiences that it's difficult to pick just one. The writing skills and discipline Dr. Hawkes honed in me were invaluable. Memories of band tour, the creek swim, "pride phase" (aka "hell week"), the training trip to Acapulco and MAC swim meets are experiences that I still cherish. The classes, sports and many extracurricular activities that I participated in were phenomenal, and not just because I enjoyed those activities, but because the people I met — my mentors, fellow band members and swimmers — shaped my future, influenced the person I am today and blossomed into lifelong friendships.

### 3. How has your education at Lycoming College influenced or helped you in your life and career?

My education at Lycoming enhanced my skills and increased my knowledge in my chosen fields of study, but it enhanced my skills as a well-rounded individual, too. Although my dream was to become a published author, the reality is that an unpublished author with a new manuscript gets feedback, makes revisions, submits queries, throws away rejection letters and makes more revisions — not money. While I pursued my dreams, I landed a copyeditor and project coordinator position at Internet Inspirations, a web design and marketing company in Tannersville, Pa., and after four years with them, I moved to southeast Georgia and enjoyed a brief temp position at Wounded Warrior Project as their publications coordinator. Writing is a skill that transcends industry, and it has taken me on an adventure I'd never envisioned for myself.

My current position as digital media coordinator in Southeast Georgia Health System's marketing department helped me grow roots in my new Georgia home, but it also connected me with fellow Lycoming Alumna, Jackie Weder '86, which was an unexpected delight while living in a charming, coastal town where everyone knows everyone, and until then, I'd known no one. Now, two years later, two of my fellow 2011 Lycoming graduates and dear friends, Alex and Meredith Bause, have joined me in coastal Georgia, as well. Six years after graduating from Lycoming College, it continues to bring success to my career and joy to my life.

### 4. What is one or two of your proudest professional or personal accomplishments that occurred after graduating from Lycoming in which your education really played a role?

Publishing my first book was definitely my proudest professional and personal accomplishment since graduating from Lycoming College. With the encouragement of Dr. Hawkes, I'd written several full-length novels and pitched them to agents and editors at multiple regional writers' conferences, entered contests and joined Romance Writers of America. A little more than a year after graduating, I landed a multi-book publishing contract with Kensington Publishing/Lyrical Press for my paranormal romance Night Blood series. My debut novel, *The City Beneath*, published in 2015; the second book in the series, *Sweet Last Drop*, published in 2016; the third book, *Eternal Reign*, published in 2017; and my fourth and final book in that series, *Day Reaper*, will release in April 2018.

The series features Cassidy DiRocco, a New York City journalist who thought she'd seen every depraved thing New York City's underbelly had to offer. But while covering what appears to be a vicious animal attack, she finds herself drawn into a world she never knew existed. Her exposé makes her the target of the handsome yet brutal Dominic Lysander, the Master Vampire of New York City, who has no problem silencing her to keep his coven's secrets safe. But Dominic offers Cassidy another option: ally. He reveals she is a night blood, a being with powers of her own, including the ability to become a vampire. As the body count escalates, Cassidy is caught in the middle of a vampire rebellion. Dominic insists she can help him stop the coming war, but wary of his intentions, Cassidy enlists the help of the charming Ian Walker, a fellow night blood. As the battle between vampires takes over the city, Cassidy will have to tap into her newfound powers and decide where to place her trust.

### 5. What piece of professional advice would you give your fellow Lycoming alumni?

One of the best, most memorable pieces of advice given to me was from Dr. Hawkes, and I'd like to pass that advice along to my fellow alumni. He said that writing a novel is not a sprint; it's a long-distance event. If you attempt to write too much too fast, you'll burn out before ever finishing the story. Write one page a day, slow and steady, and at the year's end, you'll have 365 pages written: a complete manuscript. I've written by that motto through all four of my published books and my two unpublished manuscripts, and through that experience, I've come to the realization that his advice holds true for everything concerning the publishing industry. No matter the stage of your writing career — whether you're writing your first manuscript or your fifth, pitching to agents and editors, negotiating contracts or making revisions and resubmitting your work — just keep swimming toward your dreams with strong and steady strokes, and eventually, at the end of that journey, you'll win the race. Unlike swimming, however, the long-distance event of writing never ends. There will always be that next draft to revise, that next book to write, that next agent or editor to query, and the only way to lose is to stop trying.