

Delaina Campbell knows what happens when she doesn't have the right attitude.

The New Hope High School senior knows she can be too hard on herself or get stuck on a negative thought for too long. In those instances, Campbell admits she gets distraught or loses confidence.

That's when Campbell remembers something her mother, Danica Hurst, said, "If you are worried about the wrong thing, you can get off track." Campbell uses that advice to help her relax, re-set her thoughts and try again.

Campbell has followed that approach throughout her middle school and high school years to overcome adversity. Whether it has been medical issues or personal obstacles, Campbell has navigated everything by doing her best to embrace a positive approach.

That approach paid off earlier this week, when Campbell attended a tryout for the dance team at the University of North Alabama in Florence, Alabama. Campbell did so well she earned a scholarship to be part of the squad, which is called "The Roar." On Thursday, Campbell celebrated that achievement during a signing ceremony in the multi-purpose room at New Hope High.

"At first, I was nervous," Campbell said, referring to how she felt at the tryout May 10 and 11. "I was No. 8, so I was in the second group to go. When they called us, I got a little chill and a few butterflies in my stomach, but I told myself not to get into my head and psyche myself out. I didn't think about it and just did me."

Campbell admitted she wasn't perfect during the tryout, but she believed she did well enough to catch the eye of the coaches. As she waited through call backs and for the selections to be posted, Campbell

acknowledged her anxiety increased. Nearly an hour later, she was still nervous until ... DING.

“When I saw my number up there, it was complete joy,” Campbell said when she received notification she had been selected. “I knew I could do it, so I was very happy.”

Campbell started with the New Hope Dance Xpress in the sixth grade and was a member of the team for five years. This past year, she was a mascot and performed with the New Hope High cheerleaders and with Dance Xpress at competitions.

Courtney Hall, the coach of Dance Xpress, recalls Campbell had a long-term goal of wanting to dance in college when she joined the team. She said one of her favorite things about being the coach for the middle and high school team is watching each girl’s journey from beginning to end, especially when someone like Campbell overcomes medical issues that prevented her from participating. Still, Hall said Campbell bounced back and grew as a performer and as a dancer.

“Delaina continued to dance on the team her eighth- and ninth-grade year,” Hall said. “She was always very dedicated to mastering her craft. She was also always dedicated to her team. Delaina was always the teammate who made sure she was doing what she was supposed to do, and also worked many hours outside of dance to continue to grow as a dancer. She attended several clinics hosted by colleges and was invited to participate in the American All-Star Clinic in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, her ninth-grade year.”

Hall said Campbell transitioned to the mascot team her senior year after a year away from dance. She said Campbell continued to work on the skill of performance and on her dance skills and technique outside of school. As one of the mascots, Campbell competed with the dance

team at Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) State Competition in December, as well as at Dance Team Union's Alabama State Championship in January.

"When Delaina was on the dance team, she always wanted to compete, but we were never able to due to COVID-19 and other factors," Hall said. "It was so cool to see how God worked everything out so Delaina could compete with us this year."

Hall said the perseverance Campbell showed the last six years will serve her well when she moves on to UNA. Campbell agrees and credits a strong support system that includes her mother, her step-father, Roy Hurst Jr.; her grandmother, Jerlene Pounds; and her sister and brother, Bryanna and Jayson Tucker.

Bryanna might provide the most support because she was a member of the UNA dance team for four years and she earned a bachelor's degree from the school in 2021 and a master's degree from UNA 2023. She also volunteers as an assistant coach for the UNA dance team and works as a dance teacher and competition team choreographer at Allegro Dance and Fitness in Florence.

Campbell credited her sister for encouraging her after a practice session prior to the tryout didn't go as smoothly as planned. Instead of allowing Delaina to be hard on herself, Bryanna urged her to slow down, try again and trust herself. The next practice session set the stage for Campbell to make the dance team.

Campbell will have to remember her mother's and her sister's advice because she knows the transition to college may be "a little rocky," but she is confident she will have the right mind-set for her journey.

“If I just let it go or let it slide and just keep doing what I know is right and what is best for me, I am going to be OK,” Campbell said.