

5-5-1995

05/05/1995 - New Graduate Is Role Model To Her Children And Others.pdf

University Marketing and Communications

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1995

Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "05/05/1995 - New Graduate Is Role Model To Her Children And Others.pdf" (1995). 1995. 214.

http://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1995/214

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Press Releases at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in 1995 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

95-148

May 5, 1995

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NEW GRADUATE IS ROLE MODEL TO HER CHILDREN AND OTHERS

CHARLESTON -- Making the transition from full-time housewife and mother to college student six years ago was probably the biggest challenge Marilyn Simmons of Mattoon has faced during her lifetime.

But looking back on it, the 42-year-old mother of three, church choir director and community volunteer said she would do it all over again.

On Saturday, Simmons received not one, but two degrees from Eastern Illinois University -- a bachelor of music in music education and a bachelor of science in elementary education. To top that, she graduated magna cum laude or "with high honor," which recognizes students who have achieved a grade point average of between 3.80 and 3.89 on a 4.0 scale.

Simmons did it while raising her three children: Nathan, 14, Becky, 12, and Karen, 9; working for her husband, Terry, who is with the Aid Association for Lutherans Fraternal Insurance Group; directing the junior and senior choirs at St. John's Lutheran Church in Mattoon; and giving private voice lessons.

-more-

"Without the support of my husband and children I would not be here today," Marilyn said after the afternoon graduation ceremony on the Library Quad.

As Marilyn crossed the stage with diploma in hand, Terry said he and the rest of the Simmons' cheering section, including her 83-year-old father, J. Fred Stahl of St. Louis, breathed a common sigh of relief that Marilyn had finally made it.

"All of us are so proud of her," Terry said. "Getting her bachelor's degree was something she's always wanted to do, and she's done it. We have all lived and breathed her education. It has become a family project."

"Marilyn often tried out ideas for class activities on me and the children. She used us as sounding boards," Terry commented.

Marilyn said the most important thing she has learned is how to manage her time. "I have learned to say no and have had to ask my children to assume more responsibility. But through it all, I have never lost sight of my family values."

"We have managed to remain a happy, functional family," Terry interrupted.

Marilyn, a St. Louis native, started college out of high school, but married and began raising a family. She went to school off and on while her children were growing up, but said finding day care became difficult until she found out about Lake Land College's Child Care Lab. Knowing that her children would be taken care of while she was in classes led her to enroll full time at Lake Land in 1989 at age 38. She earned her associate's degree in music from LLC before entering Eastern.

Marilyn said she hopes she has instilled a joy for learning in her children and that she has been a positive role model for them and for other adult learners. "I want people to know that it's never too late to get a college degree. It's challenging, but very rewarding. Just stick to it. It can be done."

She admitted that her interest in teaching has rubbed off on both of her daughters, who at a relatively young age, have hinted that they would like to follow in their mother's footsteps. Her son is undecided.

The itch for teaching seems to run in the family. Her sister, Helen Hetz of St. Louis, is a teacher. She inspired Marilyn to become a teacher and has been a constant source of encouragement. Her niece also is a teacher and her husband, a principal. Her father was even a teacher during the 1930s.

With more than 150 hours of college credit and two bachelor's degrees under her belt, Marilyn is setting her sights on finding a teaching job in the Mattoon or Charleston area.

She hopes her two degrees from Eastern will make her more "sellable" to prospective employers and said it doesn't matter whether she becomes a music or an elementary school teacher. "I love them both and would be satisfied and fulfilled doing either."

"No matter what happens, I always will have something to fall back on."