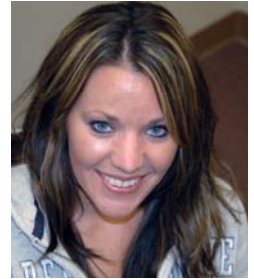




*A Campus of the University of Wisconsin Colleges*

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## Press Release



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### ***In recognition of non-traditional student week: Cherith Dilley, overcoming fear to find success***

The first week in November is national non-traditional student week. "The nationwide celebration is something we at UW-Richland are pleased to acknowledge," said George Henze, UW-Richland's adult student advisor. "It provides an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the achievements of our adult students, typically about 20% of our student population. The story of every individual who returns to college as an adult is unique, yet they often share common challenges. And they inspire us."

One such UW-Richland student is Cherith Dilley, **Blue River**, the mother of five children, four boys--ages 11, 9, twins age 6, and a 3-year-old daughter.

Successful and confident, she's earned Dean's List High Honors and a number of scholarships. An essay she wrote for an English composition course was chosen for publication in *Quintessence 2009*, a book of exemplary student work.

But it took some courage on her part to get there.

"At first, I was scared to walk on campus," she said. "I wanted to hide under my desk. But I didn't want to fail."

Dilley, whose maiden name was DeFabbio, grew up in rural Richland Center. She and her husband, who works in the construction business, raise beef cattle on their farm. "I always wanted to go to college," she said. "Being a stay-at-home mom was satisfying but I was ready to move on. What held me back was fear."

In the spring of 2007, she decided to take two classes to see how it would go. "'What's the worst that could happen?' I asked myself. My answer was 'You'd spend a semester and find out that maybe it wasn't for you.'"

In fact, she found success.

“Once I got out of my comfort zone, I grew as a person. I was afraid of public speaking. I needed to get beyond my fears,” she said. She found good support in speech class from her professor as well as classmates.

“I see many doors opening for me,” she said. “It’s good to take the array of classes for the associate degree. I’ve found new interests that I never dreamed I would really love—like writing. I feel so much more well-rounded as a person.”

As a stay-at-home mom, she said, “The work I did was the type that needed to be done all over again tomorrow. Being able to complete an assignment and move on was a really good feeling.”

Dilley acknowledges there’ve been low points. “There are moments when I feel overwhelmed but I struggle through and come out on the other side.” Anatomy & physiology, and algebra courses challenged her most. “My mom became my study buddy, asking me questions that helped me memorize things,” she said.

Other family members have been supportive, as well. “My husband will take the kids somewhere when I need to study. And he does housework,” she said.

“I can see my children’s attitude toward school change. It’s good for them to see mom doing homework. They think I have a lot of homework. When I get an A on a test, they’re proud of me. They tell their teachers about mom’s school,” she said.

She’s found that another of her fears, that as an adult she wouldn’t fit in, isn’t an issue. “I thought it would be awkward. But there are a lot of adult students—several in every class I have. And it’s fun to be around the teen students. I’ve been able to give them advice a few times.”

Once she completes her UW-Richland studies, Dilley plans to transfer to UW-Platteville and major in psychology. Her goal is to earn a master’s degree in clinical psychology.” Mental illness is misunderstood,” she said. “My passion for the field is drawn from a relative who is bipolar.”

Between homework and housework, being at her children’s football games and wrestling tournaments, Dilley managed to fit in a bit of campus social activity. Last spring, she and a friend took part in the annual Roadrunner Road Rallye, a question/direction skill test and a scenic country drive. “It was so much fun,” she said.

“While I’m excited about the prospect of moving on, it will be a sad day for me when I leave UW-Richland. I’ll have to come back for the Road Rallye,” she said.

“I’m very happy that I chose to have my family first and come back to school later,” she said. “It’s benefiting the whole family.”

Does she have advice for other adults thinking about returning to college? Yes.

“Just go for it!” she said.

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