Student chooses full circle with career choice

By Natalia Muñoz

Robyn LaFerriere knew she wanted to become a nurse since her early 20s. Now 50, she is two semesters from achieving that dream as a graduate of Greenfield Community College.

“When I first started, I thought, ‘What am I doing here with all these kids?’ But it didn’t take long to find community,” she said. “Overall, I have found GCC to be an open and accepting school that welcomes inclusion of the students regardless of their difference. So far, the greatest experience I have had is the combination of a large mix of age groups and cultures which creates a situation where multiple perspectives are blended, providing great diversity in thinking and learning.”

LaFerriere works part-time as a massage therapist at the Undergraduate Health spa (more formally known as the PEPspo) in Northampton, while studying full-time at GCC.

“I have not had any illusions about changing the system but I hope to be working on marginalized communities,” she said.

In the meantime, as a massage therapist, she continues to probe what she learned at GCC and applies it in her therapy.

“Many of the folks I met were living with untreated physical and/or mental illness. Granted, some lived that way by choice, but it was shocking to learn about the treatment they received,” LaFerriere said. “Many of the folks I met were used to the hospital emergency rooms as a source of the pain. As we became acquainted, they would tell me stories about the treatment they received from the health care system,” she said. “Many of the folks I have seen living with untreated physical and mental illness, some lived that way by choice, but the majority went untreated because of their lack of insurance, money on a compliant Ryan Act, which led to their marginalized status within the health care system and society.”

For her, health care is as much a social justice issue as it is a medical issue.

“The world we live in as a society is the work surrounding the health care system and society. It is this creativity and devotion to nursing that I am finding the greatest healing.”

LaFerriere was appalled by the system and went to training to manage her father’s caregiving situation.

“I have a unique perspective and education from my work with hospice care, I was reintroduced to the skill, dedication, and compassion of the art and science of nursing. The hospice care, I was reintroduced to the skill, dedication, and compassion of the art and science of nursing. The hospice nurses and CNA’s working with my dad and me in preparing us for his death was life-changing,” she said. “When it came time for hospice care, I was reintroduced to the skill, dedication, and compassion of the art and science of nursing. The hospice nurses and CNA’s working with my dad and me in preparing us for his death was life-changing.”

“The greatest experience I have had is the combination of many age groups and cultures which creates a situation where multiple perspectives are blended, providing great diversity in thinking and learning. A beautiful thing in my world. I can sit and have a discussion where I can learn from the unique perspectives.”

LaFerriere graduated from GCC with an associate degree in Early Childhood Education and Care Office, GCC’s Educator Development Department and WLNA (Western Massachusetts Leadership Network for Action) is conducting a collaborative effort of area early childhood and school age educators and professionals working together to educate, advocate and support the development of new leaders in the field.”

For additional information contact: Kim V. Sakoda 775-1770 or ksakoda@gcc.mass.edu

Sponsorship:

The Holyoke County Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament, co-sponsored by Greenfield Savings Bank and Cohn and Company, is Monday, May 18 at the Country Club of Greenfield. shotgun start at noon. The C-Chairs of the event are Terry Bourne and Princy Systc. The cost is $150 per player which includes Bag Lunch and Barbeque Buffet Dinner. Please go to the GCC Foundation’s site, gcc.mass.edu/alumni or call 413-775-1600 and register for this event. For more information on the event, contact: (413) 775-1600.

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On April 14th from 1-4 p.m., just in time to celebrate “The Week of the Young Child” (April 19-25), Greenfield Community College will host the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care’s New Leadership Network at the Student Life and The Diversity Committee.

The Art Student Exhibit

An annual exhibition and celebration featuring the work of current GCC and MassArt students.

Save the Date

Open House

Greenfield Community College
MAIN CAMPUS, Thursday, April 23, 2009

Day Program: 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM
Evening Program: 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

• See current GCC students in action
• Nursing Health Fair
• Musicians and artists
• Student Leaders
• Visit college classes - be a student for the day

Learn about the many programs at GCC
• Transfer Programs
• Career Programs
• CTE Programs
• Certificates

Access information you need to make decisions
• Application & Acceptance Process
• Financial Aid
• Student Support Services

Plan your visit

For more information and a complete look at the day’s activities visit: the Office of Admission at (413) 775-1801. GCC’s ANNUAL SPRING OPEN HOUSE is open to the entire community.

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