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PURSuing A DREAM AFTER YEARS OF HELPING OTHERS

Dianna Roberts' father was on hospice in 1997. She was so impressed with the care he received that Dianna went to work for the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of Kaufman County. Dianna has been a home health aide there for nearly five years, providing in-home care to the frail elderly and disabled in a three-county area.

Dianna enjoys working with patients so much that she thought about going to college to become a nurse. She hadn't been in a classroom, though, since 1997, when she graduated from Scurry-Rosser High School. It was a big step entering college 10 years later. A lot had happened in her life since then, including raising two sons.

Coincidentally, two of Dianna's co-workers at VNA of Kaufman County were having similar thoughts about enrolling in college to become nurses. LeAnn Perkins had grown up in Kaufman. As a high school senior preparing to graduate in 1979, LeAnn began looking for a job and found one as a file clerk with VNA of Kaufman County. During her nearly 29 years there, she's been a home health aide scheduler, medical records secretary, professional service clerk, office manager, junior secretary, and medical records coordinator.

Another one of Dianna's co-workers, Lynn Warren, has been a home health aide since 2000. Most of her patients live in Ellis County. Lynn grew up in Rosser and following graduation from high school in 1984, she went to work in a nursing home. Lynn came to VNA of Kaufman County after calling to enquire if there were any job openings there.

Although the three women find their present work fulfilling, they decided that nursing was the next step in their careers and for personal fulfillment, as well. With some trepidation, they took the plunge in fall 2007 and enrolled in their first class – Microcomputer Applications - at the Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC) campus in Terrell.

One of their worries was that they would feel out of place among younger students. That

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concern was quickly put to rest the first day of class when they discovered that the ages of their classmates were quite diverse. "I pictured college to be like high school, where everybody was pretty much the same young age," Dianna recalls. "College, though, is a lot different," she notes. "There are many like us, who went to work right after high school, started families, and then years later decided to pursue a college degree."

Stepping into a college classroom for the first time was a little daunting for the three co-workers, but they felt good about completing their first class and are happy with their decision to pursue a nursing degree. They believe that the extra work is worth it for their future and feel that nursing is the right profession for them.

Dianna, LeAnn, and Lynn have enrolled in Human Anatomy and Physiology I, and General Psychology for the spring 2008 semester at TVCC. They plan to graduate with associate degrees in nursing in 2011 and take the state examination to become registered nurses.

"Graduation may seem like a long way off, but realizing a dream starts with taking that first step," Dianna states. Her co-workers couldn't agree more.



VNA of Kaufman County employees (left to right) Dianna Roberts, Lynn Warren, and LeAnn Perkins began studying together at Trinity Valley Community College in fall 2007 to achieve their dream of becoming nurses after years of helping others.

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