Making a difference

Kim Castle epitomizes the spirit of Sullivan in Louisville. When she first met with Admissions Officer Marika Adams in 1992, she was at a low point in her life. Her husband had passed away after a long battle with cancer, and the mounting medical bills resulted in having her heart turned off; she and her children were close to losing their home. Marika gave her hope that getting her education could lead to a better life, and that it did! After earning her Executive Masters of Business Administration (EMBA) in 2007, she earned a second master’s degree in Conflict Management in 2009.

Sullivan degrees inspired her business

Utilizing the knowledge from both degrees, Kim founded the Appalachian Peace Center. It started as a place that offered basic and family mediation services and mediation training. Under Kim’s direction and leadership it has grown to much more. The Center now also offers: Parenting classes, Co-op Parenting and Divorce classes, Anger Management courses, and Domestic Violence classes, and other services designed to help people deal with negative conflicts. These skills offer hope to parents who have lost faith. From Kim’s perspective, she is giving back the hope that was given to her.

While the Center keeps her busy, Kim recently took on another project and purchased a store in downtown Winchester, Kentucky called the Olde Blue Cow Gift Shop. The store was named for a family tradition based on fond memories of childhood stories her grandfather told her as a child with the Olde Blue Cow theme.

Continues to give back

There are two empty rooms in the back of the store. In one, Kim will offer art therapy classes for people who are overwhelmed and struggling with life. In another, she will provide classes for ex-offenders who find it difficult to get a job and have a desire to start a business. She will teach them how to write a business plan, work with a banker, find an insurance agent, and put together the pieces of a business (and their lives).

Member of first doctoral cohort

In addition to Kim’s pay-it-forward and entrepreneurial spirit, she has continued her education at Sullivan. As a charter member of Sullivan University’s Ph.D. in Management program, Kim is now working on her dissertation research to explore what motivates workplace bullies. And even when she completes this requirement for the degree, she wants to devote part of the Appalachian Peace Center to research. Kim will continue to work to make our world a more peaceful place to live, one person at a time.

Changing her life through education

“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.” - Maria Robinson

Life had not been easy for Samantha Johnson. Born to a young teenage mother who was addicted to alcohol and drugs, Samantha spent her own teenage years raising her baby sister. “I was 12 when my sister was born and because my mom was irresponsible and consumed by drugs, I became a parent to my sister instead of being a sibling. When my mom passed away from a drug overdose, all she had left to show for her life was one small storage building with a few personal possessions. At that moment, I decided that this was not how I was going to live and I was going to do whatever I could to break that cycle.”

Graduation was a milestone

Samantha’s drive and determination drove her to be the first person in her family (both sides) to graduate from high school. She achieved a greater milestone when she graduated from Sullivan with her degree in Justice and Public Safety last fall. “Graduation was surreal for me because I felt like I had finally broken that cycle of self destruction within my family,” she stated.

Career field was a natural choice

Her experiences growing up had given her an overwhelming need and need to help others. She feels “my purpose is to utilize the tools I have developed throughout life in efforts to survive my childhood, to help others to survive.”

Achieving her degree has been an inspiration to her daughter. “Earning my degree will not only allow me to reach my goals and succeed, it has also been a great influence on my daughter. I love being her role model and setting a positive example for her...” Though I’m not where I want to be at this moment, I’m sure nowhere near where I was 10 years ago. I’m a survivor and I’m never going to stop fighting for a better life.”

Continuing her education

Samantha’s goal for a better life includes pursuing her Bachelor’s in Business Administration; she will be enrolling at Sullivan this spring. She knows it won’t be easy. “Because I don’t have a family support system, it seems that I have to work a hundred times harder to even move a few steps forward. I am so thankful that everyone at Sullivan has always been very supportive to me, I am especially grateful for Dr. Jerry Sims for all his support and encouraging conversations.”

Overcoming adversity builds character and character in turn builds hope. Samantha Johnson has certainly faced a number of challenges and obstacles in her life. Now, armed with her degree and with her determination to continue her education, she has reason to hope for a brighter future and to have the opportunity to use her own experiences and struggles to motivate others to fulfill their dreams.

Tutoring & Writing Center Expands

Sachith Prattik and Melanie Clay review some work in the Tutoring and Writing Center.

“I have been visiting the tutoring center for four quarters and the tutors are always very helpful and patient. Without them, I would not be where I am now.”

MELANIE CLAY, Business Administration

Over the past few months, the Tutoring & Writing Center has been growing into its new digs. With a few room changes, the Center has doubled in size, allowing for an increase in the number of computers and tables available for students, study and study groups.

New coordinator named

While Plus Fridays provide opportunities for students to meet with instructors for individual assistance, the Center has been active since 2005 when Dean David Tudor proposed setting aside a room and designating it as an area for students to seek out of the classroom assistance during the regular school week. It wasn’t until recently, however, that the Center had a designated full-time person to oversee the day to day operations. Associate Professor, Sachith Prattik, has filled that role by adding Tutoring Center Coordinator to her responsibilities at Sullivan University.

Under Sachith’s leadership, the Center has increased its number of available tutoring hours, and both students and faculty are using it more often. “By moving to a larger space, students, faculty, and tutors have a supportive place to collaborate and learn” explained Ms. Prattik.

Congratulations to our graduates!

*Graduation is always a highlight of my job. Having spent a great deal of time working with these students, counseling them through the rough moments and celebrating their successes, I get a real kick watching them make it to the finish line.*

ANN MOORE, Director of Student Services & Community Relations

Sullivan’s graduations are unique. Rather than one held in May like most other collegiate institutions, Sullivan students graduate every January, March, June and September. The university holds two formal commencements in April and October. Sullivan’s 2014 Spring graduation is also at Southeast Christian Church on Saturday, April 26 at 9 am. Everyone is invited to attend.

Welcome Dr. Adam Evans

Dr. Adam Evans and Graduate Program in Entrepreneurship class.