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**Schoolcraft graduates 1,000**

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**Go Where They Grow!**

Saturday was a big day for Mervat Kashou of Livonia - she received her associate's degree from Schoolcraft College.

"It was almost too much for me," she said. "I didn't think I could finish, but I hung on and I did it."

Kashou joined more than 1,000 other students who participated in commencement ceremonies Friday and Saturday at Schoolcraft College. The college draws some students from Farmington and Farmington Hills.

At Friday's ceremony for public service graduates, former Michigan governor James Blanchard made the commencement address. On Saturday, the Rev. George Shaloub, pastor of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Livonia, was the speaker for the general student commencement.

Kashou, a native of Palestine, received her degree in office information systems. The Garden City High School graduate had finished a year of college when she left to be married and became the mother of three children.

She returned to college because she wanted to get a job

in a professional office setting.

"I like being able to look forward to work," she said.

She chose Schoolcraft College because it is close to her home. Her oldest child was 7 when she began.

Between working in the college registrar's office and being a wife and mother, it took Kashou five years to earn her degree.

"I took two classes every semester," she said. "My husband kept asking me when I was going to finish. I kept saying next year. Finally, I am graduating."

For Kashou, the commencement is extra special because Shaloub is the pastor of her church.

While attending Schoolcraft, Kashou and her husband received their U.S. citizenship.

"Schoolcraft is the best thing that ever happened to me," she said. "When I came to college, I didn't know anything. I learned a lot and met wonderful people."

She vows to get a full-time job at the college. "I'm not moving out of here. The college is stuck with me," she said.

For Tom Savage, Schoolcraft

College director of food service, graduation was a family affair.

Savage's children Jessica and Thomas, are among the graduates this year.

"I kind of grew up here," said son Thomas. "I came to work with my dad, and I knew my way around campus. I knew the student side and the employee side."

The older Savage said this was always his plan.

"Since I began working at Schoolcraft, I knew my children would study here," he said. "I have another one coming next year. It's nice to have your kids on campus. They stop at the cafeteria to see me, but I make them buy their own lunch."

Jessica will be transferring to the University of Michigan where she plans to earn a master's degree. Brother Thomas, who took four years to go through Schoolcraft, will go to Western Michigan University in the fall, where he will study a pre-law curriculum. He hopes to attend U-M Law School.

"It's been interesting to be here with my family," said Jessica. "It helped and everyone on campus knew who I was. That was OK."

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