



Janet Jackson displays maps in the office of Orange Water and Sewer Authority in Chapel Hill. Jackson graduated May 18 with a degree in geography from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

FHS graduate earns college degree - 30 years later

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

After pursuing her bachelor's degree for more than 20 years, one would think Janet Dutton Jackson would have given up.

Jackson, who grew up in Farmington Hills and is a 1973 graduate of Farmington High School, finally got her degree this spring from the University of North Carolina - 30 years after taking her first college course in Michigan.

Jackson's parents, Jack and Jim, run the Farmington Hills-based Northwest Pattern Co. Patti said she's very proud of her daughter's accomplishment. In fact, the college newspaper took notice of it, publishing a story about how Jackson never gave up on her dream despite several serious setbacks along the way.

Looking back, Jackson compiles a long list of difficulties: nursing a severely broken leg, raising two kids on her own

after her first marriage broke up, looking after a sick child, going back to work then focusing on her bachelor's degree in geography after landing a job in the geographic information systems department for the Orange Water and Sewer Authority, which serves Chapel Hill and Carrboro, N.C.

"We're really proud of her," said Patti, who noted her daughter was in Farmington High's marching band. "She really sticks to it."

Geography Professor John Florin told the UNC newspaper that he guided Jackson in her four years at UNC. He is quoted as saying her "enthusiasm, perseverance and constant upbeat attitude" pulled her ahead of other candidates for a coveted undergraduate award.

The McNally Award for Excellence in Geography recognizes the senior geography major with superior academic performance. Jackson has since re-married and gained a stepdaughter. She uses her bachelor's degree in geography, with a minor in information science, at the water department as

the GIS coordinator.

Where did she find the energy to complete her degree?

She credits her parents' drive and determination.

"I think I come by it naturally," Jackson said by phone from North Carolina. "I'm glad I am where I am," she said. "It's been a long road."

When Jackson knew where she wanted to go, she realized that she needed technology skills to get there.

"I wanted a career that would go the distance," Jackson is also the first student at the university to go on a speakers tour. She traveled across the state, talking to community groups about the benefits of automatic external heart defibrillators.

She won first place in a regional safety speech contest for her efforts.

Jackson said she has advice for single parents who want to pursue higher education.

"Things don't always work in a straight line," she said. "There will be setbacks, but you keep going."

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AAUW 'Garden Party' fund-raiser slated

The Farmington Branch of the American Association of University Women in conjunction with the Longacre House at 24705 Farmington Road, Farmington Hills, will present a summer Garden Party on Saturday, June 28. A salad luncheon menu is scheduled, prepared by the

Longacre House resident chef. Donations are \$21 each, and the public is invited to attend. All proceeds go to the AAUW Scholarship Fund.

Call for reservations by June 13, (248) 653-3686, or (248) 661-0706.

Attendees are requested to wear big hats and long,

romantic skirts. The Longacre House is an 1869 Georgian Manor House, with beautiful gardens to enjoy.

"There is lots of room, and we will not be hampered by the weather, should it become rainy," said Ruth Klehm, co-president of the Farmington branch.

Area Founders Festival needs you

The Farmington Area Founders Festival is seeking volunteers for the annual event, held July 17-19 in downtown Farmington.

Festival organizers guarantee a good time, new friends, good feelings and a sense of pride

that come with being involved in this community event.

Volunteers will be treated to a continental breakfast, food tickets, refreshments and other amenities to make their time even more enjoyable. The application process

is simple and painless. Organizers strive to match volunteer interests with the areas that need assistance.

For more information or a volunteer form, go to www.foundersfestival.com or call (248) 932-3378.

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