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Heather Longboat: Multi-tasking in life and career

By L.M. VanEvery



Not many women would think about returning to school while waiting to give birth to their first child but Heather Longboat did. Heather, a graduate of McKinnon Park Secondary School in 2001, married in 2005. Already a busy time in her life, she decided to return to school pursue post-secondary education.

Heather chose to attend triOS College and enrolled in the Administrative Assistant program. She graduated in 2006 around the same time her daughter Lily, 4, was born.

A new mother, Heather was not finished with her education. Unexpected issues with her second child's birth inspired her to return to school and specialize in training as a Medical Office Assistant.

"My second child, Robert had a very high risk and complicated pregnancy and was born almost six weeks prematurely," Heather said. Her son had a lot of medical issues afterwards and while Heather attended all of the

necessary medical appointments at the hospitals and doctor's offices, she met many medical office personnel during this journey.

"I decided that I wanted to be able to go into being a medical business clerk in order to help patients. It seemed like a good fit as I knew a lot of medical terminology from my own medical issues as well as my son's medical issues," she says. Heather continued her studies at triOS College in medical administration and graduated in 2009.

Now working part-time in the medical administration field, Heather works in many different departments and there is no such thing as a typical day for her. "Depending on the day of the week, the day can either be very busy or very slow depending on what clinics are running that day," she says. One day she can be in the Burn and Trauma Unit and the next, an in-patient ward. She's responsible for duties such as making sure patient charts include all forms necessary and updating records for patient intakes and discharges. It is also her responsibility to field requests from the nurses and doctors. "Anything they ask," she says.

The most challenging part of Heather's work is keeping current with the computer system and honouring the different procedures of the doctors. "Every doctor will have a different way of doing things," she says.

While her job is highly demanding, it is also extremely rewarding. "I love my job," she says. Through determination and her ability to multi-task, Heather has accomplished her goals of helping patients and working for Hamilton Health Sciences.

A future goal Heather is working toward is to obtain full-time employment within Hamilton Health Sciences organization. She recognizes this is difficult to achieve because the system is unionized. Heather has succeeded in working her way up to regular part-time employment. She has gone the extra step and made herself known to other department managers. "The more people you know, the better chances you have," she says. Persistent and determined, Heather's advice to others who are looking to work in a hospital setting is "Don't give up and keep on applying yourself."

Although it was difficult to return to school, start a family and have medical issues to deal with, Heather has succeeded. When asked what she likes about her choice of career, she answers, "Everything."

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