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Lifestyles

NE Woman: Jane Maas

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To say Jane Maas had a big learning curve upon becoming the head of Johnson College's radiologic technology program in 2003 would be a big understatement.

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Published: Sunday, September 28, 2008 10:39 AM EDT

To say Jane Maas had a big learning curve upon becoming the head of Johnson College's radiologic technology program in 2003 would be a big understatement.

For one thing, she had to start the program from scratch.

For another, she had zero administrative experience, and no real classroom experience to speak of, either.

"I had no idea how to start a program. And I had no idea what I was in for," Ms. Maas said.

Five years and four graduating classes later, the 34-year-old Pittston Twp. resident is thriving in her role as the department's chairperson. She currently oversees 60 students, two faculty members and an assistant and a \$70,000 annual budget, all while teaching a full day's worth of classes and labs.

Eight more years

When first launched, the two-year program was given two-year provisional accreditation from the Joint Review Committee in Education in Radiologic Technology (JRCERT). Just recently, JRCERT reaccredited the program for an additional eight years, the maximum amount.

"Now, it's smooth sailing. It's just about making the program better every day," said Ms. Maas, a single mother to daughters Taylor, 8, and Morgan, 6.

"If someone had told me I would be a manager, a teacher and starting a program, I would have told them they were crazy," she continued. "But looking back now, I wouldn't change it for the world."

Originally, Ms. Maas, daughter of Jane Roche, with whom she lives, and Frank Roche of Duryea, had aspirations to become a physical therapist. But, despite being an above-average student at Pittston Area High School, she was a below-average standardized-test taker; her SAT scores simply weren't high enough to get her into a quality PT program.

But after doing some observing at local hospitals, she decided to stay within the medical field and study radiology at Misericordia University. As she saw it, working with X-rays seemed like a good choice, given her lifelong interest in pictures, as well as a natural empathy for people's suffering.

"I'm a very visual person," she said. "I was fascinated that you got to work with a person and produce the best possible picture."

Upon graduating, she landed a job at Community Medical Center, and then an additional position at Scranton Orthopedics. Good bedside manner was imperative for both jobs.

"You can't just throw them on the table and do what you need to do," Ms. Maas said. "That extra few minutes you take to talk to people helps to relax them. And makes your job easier."

Then, one day, she got a letter from Misericordia, which was looking for clinical supervisors for the radiologic department.

"I got the letter, and, oh, my God, it just sparked that interest," she said. "It brought back all these passions that I had from school."

Offered position

She did that for a year, then went on maternity leave after giving birth to Morgan. Then her friend and colleague — and former professor — Lorie Zelna came to her with news that she had been offered the Johnson College position, and she wanted Ms. Maas to come with her as her clinical instructor.

But then Ms. Zelna was offered tenure at Misericordia, and decided she was better off staying put. So Johnson offered Ms. Maas the job.

"The rest is history," Ms. Maas said.

At first, 12-hour days were the norm for Ms. Maas, who struggled mightily to attain accreditation from JRCERT, develop the department's policies and curriculum and put together a permanent staff. Meanwhile, she was taking night classes at Misericordia for her master's degree in organizational management, which she received in May.

And then, of course, there was the little matter of getting in front of a roomful of students. Despite her experience in clinical instruction, she had never done any classroom teaching.

Alas, it came “shockingly easy to her,” she said.

“I think that’s because I’m comfortable with the information I’m about to present,” said Ms. Maas, noting she also relied on the countless tips she received from fellow Johnson faculty members.

“The best thing is when a student comes to me, and after teaching them for so long, the light bulb clicks, and they say, ‘I got it.’ That’s the most rewarding feeling ever,” she said. “To me, it’s like you get a bonus every semester.”

That’s just one of the many reasons Ms. Maas is grateful for the unexpected path her life has taken.

“My mom always tells me everything happens for a reason,” she said. “And I really believe that’s true.”

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To nominate a Northeast Woman, please submit requests via e-mail to lifestyles@timeshamrock.com or mail them to Northeast Woman Nominations, The Sunday Times, 149 Penn Ave., Scranton, PA 18503. Please include the woman’s name, address and the reason the reader feels the woman is deserving. Those submitting need to include their name and a daytime phone number. Meet Jane Maas

At home: Resides in Pittston Twp. with her daughters, Taylor, 8, and Morgan, 6, and her mother, Jane Roche. Her father, Frank Roche, lives in Duryea. She has two brothers, Frank, Tustin, Calif.; and Jason, Pittston.

At work: Chairperson of the radiologic technology department at Johnson College.

Inspiration: Her daughters, her mom, her students and her fellow faculty members

Aspirations: “To be a good role model to my children and my students,” and “to give 100 percent every single day and to live life to its fullest.”

Diversions: Gardening and spending time with family

Aversion: Close mindedness and lack of direction

Quote: “Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” — St. Francis of Assisi

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