

President's Circle Award and the Student Success Essay Contest



Kimberly Alexis Martirone

Florida State College at Jacksonville

The double winner of the 2009 President's Circle Award and Student Success Essay Contest is Kimberly Alexis Martirone. Kimberly is a student at Florida State College at Jacksonville where she has a 4.0 grade point average. She chose to attend a state college after she had been admitted to a local university, a choice she says instilled in her a passion for learning that will fuel her future study. Kimberly hopes one day to become a veterinarian.

My early childhood years were a time of constant struggle learning Mathematics and English. As a result of my speech and language disability, I had to study harder and longer than most children my age. However, I was determined to succeed and not give up hope. Due to my sheer determination and studying skills, I have made the A/B Honor Roll throughout middle and high schools. In addition, I was inducted into the National Honor Society at Fletcher Middle School and Fletcher High School. I have just completed my first year at FCCJ and am proud of my accomplishments of having a 4.0 GPA and making the Dean's List at FCCJ.

When my twin brother and I were two years old, my mother asked our pediatrician why we were not speaking as well as other two year old children. He informed my parents to not worry and there was no concern at this time. However, when we turned three years old with no improvement, my parents were concerned and took my brother and I to an independent Speech and Language clinic. The results of the tests concluded that our expressive speech was at a twelve-month level and our receptive speech was at a twenty-two month level. We were immediately placed into speech therapy at the Speech and Language Center for speech therapy to be performed twice a week for the next nine months. During this period, our speech therapist advised our parents to enroll us into the Child Find Program. The Child Find Program performed psychological and speech testing to determine if my brother and I were eligible to be placed into the program. In addition, our pediatrician suggested that we be placed into a W.E.E. daycare school program for a period of five months to be around other children our age in order to stimulate our speech development.

When my brother and I turned four years old, the Child Find Program placed us in a Speech and Language Impairment Program (SLI) at Atlantic Beach Elementary School. Both of us attended this school for four years. My parents purchased us a puppy in order to help stimulate our speech, at the advice of our pediatrician. I tested out of the SLI program and was placed in Seabreeze Elementary School for

the third grade. However, the SLI Program transferred my brother to another elementary school. During third grade I continued my speech therapy at Seabreeze Elementary School approximately three times a week. Once at Seabreeze Elementary, I began to have comprehension problems in Math and English. At this time, my father started to tutor me in Math and English at home. My father spent countless hours tutoring me in these two subjects. My speech improved to a point that by the fifth grade I no longer required speech therapy. During my Middle School years, my science teacher advised my parents to place me into the 504 Program. This Program provided me with additional time for homework, projects, and tests, which will follow me through my college years.

During my senior year at Fletcher High School, I applied to the Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) and the University of North Florida (UNF). I received letters of acceptance to both colleges. After discussions with my parents, teachers and guidance counselors, I made the decision to attend FCCJ. FCCJ is a local, community college that has my Zoology major with convenient classes and schedules. In addition, it has a small class environment that provides for a higher teacher to student ratio and a better learning environment for me. Attending FCCJ will also allow me to live at home. My decision to attend FCCJ was the best decision of my life.

Before entering my first semester at FCCJ, I had to take a CPT (College Placement Test). The College Placement Test determined the appropriate college courses for me to enroll. As a result, I was successful in passing the math and reading placement tests with high scores. Although my scores were high, my English Composition I professor advised me to enroll in a developmental course. Consequently, I was placed into ENC 0021 Introduction to Composition B and MAT 0024 Elementary Algebra.

ENC 0021 Introduction to Composition B provided me with a greater proficiency in basic writing skills. This course greatly enhanced my writing skills in being able to write in clear, concise, and organized paragraphs in spite of my speech and language disability. Enrolling in this course also

increased my ability to utilize correct grammar and punctuation. As a result, this course will enable me to use these tools in my other English courses, daily life and future employment opportunities. In addition, I enrolled in MAT0024 Elementary Algebra. This course enabled me to better comprehend basic math skills including percentages, ratios, and problem solving. Enrolling in this course has improved my ability to understand and utilize these basic math skills in every day life situations such as paying bills, balancing my checkbook, and making sound financial decisions. As a result, this course will enable me to utilize these skills in other Math courses, daily life and future employment opportunities.

Due to my hard work and the support of my parents and professors, I received an "A" in both of my College Preparatory Courses. I thoroughly enjoyed taking these courses and they assisted me in expanding my knowledge of English and Math. In addition, I passed both Exit Exams. In today's technological environment, Math and English are two critical skills that must be mastered to ensure that I have a successful career in life. These two courses are instrumental in preparing me to achieve my future career goal of becoming a Veterinarian. Currently, I am enrolled in ENC 1101 English Composition I and MAT 1103 Intermediate Algebra and have an A average in both of these courses as a result of my previous College Preparatory Courses.

My life experiences should be a role model for other students with learning disabilities. I am proof that with hard work, determination, and tutoring assistance from my parents that anyone can accomplish their goals. My Mathematics and English Developmental Courses at FCCJ have enabled me to learn the necessary basic skills needed in today's technology-based environment. These developmental courses have also allowed me take the "next step" in furthering my education by enrolling in English Composition and Intermediate Algebra classes. My success in these developmental courses has instilled confidence and a learning passion inside of me that will assist me in achieving my ultimate goal of becoming a Veterinarian.