

Debbie Hanchett: Ambition is Contagious.



Debbie Hanchett is a mom with professional and academic ambitions. After reading about Lincoln College-Normal's Accelerated Bridge to Education (ABE) program in the *Pantagraph* last fall, Debbie quickly formed a plan. She had always wanted to return to school and obtain her bachelor's degree, but she had never found the right way to do it. She went to an ABE informational meeting to learn more about the program. She liked what she heard and enrolled in the program right away, becoming one of ABE Program Director Pam Johnston's "original 17."

A busy mom with a full time job, Debbie valued the flexibility the Lincoln College-Normal ABE program could offer. In the ABE program, Debbie found not only the convenience she needed but a great education as well. Debbie describes the LCN Accelerated Bridge to Education program: "The teachers that are chosen to teach the ABE program are dedicated to what they do and are willing to help you whenever you ask. The program is structured by the advisors so that one class fits well with the next." The experience of meeting new people and learning new things has been so enriching that this already busy mom has agreed to become an ABE Ambassador. Overall, Debbie describes her ABE experience as simply "phenomenal."

In the Hanchett family, education matters. Debbie's daughter, Heather, twenty-one, is studying Graphic Design at Heartland Community College, and Debbie's son, Ben, eighteen, is a freshman studying music education at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. With her children pursuing their own college educations, the time was right for Debbie to head to college herself. Her husband of nearly twenty-three years, Joe, was behind her all the way, so much so that he has decided to enroll in the ABE program as well. Debbie's ambition is contagious.

Despite not having taken a math class in over twenty-five years, Debbie found her math classes particularly rewarding. Additionally, she credits philosophy professor Jeff Kratz as an instructor who challenged her to "think more about things I had never even dreamed of" as "he engaged us and made learning fun." His advice, "do the work and the grade will come," is advice Debbie continues to follow today.

As a Crop Underwriter at Country Financial, Debbie knows that her college degree will help her explore career opportunities that are available within her company. These are opportunities that she would not have been able to consider without a bachelor's degree. While she is still undecided about continuing on for her master's degree, she is considering it. As an ambassador for the ABE program, she hopes her story can inspire others to try to do more in their lives. Like so many working mothers whose adult children have gone off to college, Debbie had many options. The decision she made to go to college was certainly not the easiest, but she has excelled, and with her help and contagious spirit other ABE students at LCN are sure to do likewise.

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