

Ten Alumni, Three Generations, and One University

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**Explain how the learning community at Eastern Illinois University inspired you to make a difference while you were a student and how these values will continue to inspire a better future for you and for your community.**

In 2008, I arrived at EIU with a duffle bag full of clothes, a laptop, and an open mind. During my time at EIU, I have constructed theatrical sets, danced and acted on stage, written for a newspaper, participated in research, assessed the physical performance of student athletes, and presented at premier international conferences.

My opportunities at EIU have shaped the person who stands here today. I have learned who I am and who I am not. I know that I am and always will be EIU. I know that those who are EIU accomplish the goals they set for themselves and through these accomplishments, communities become enriched and quality of life in our society improves. I know this because I am the third generation and the tenth individual in my family to become EIU. I have observed my family members' accomplishments and I am proud of them and their impact on communities.

In 1947, a love of the performing arts set the stage for my grandparents - Carolyn and Gene - to meet at EIU. Both Carolyn and Gene taught and celebrated music during their years after graduating from EIU. My grandfather played upright base for an Air Force Jazz band in Greenland to provide much needed morale boosts to troops fighting in World War II. My grandfather also played trumpet in the Chicago Symphony. My grandmother was a highly sought after accompanist in the Chicago area. My grandparents enriched communities and enhanced the lives of those around them. My grandparents are and always will be EIU.

Following the footsteps of my grandparents, my parents - Steven and Robin - met at EIU in the fall of 1973. After graduating in 1978 with a K-12 certification in general/vocal music, my mother began her teaching career in Lawrenceville, Illinois. My mother taught music at Community School District 20 for 37 years. During her time as an

educator, my mother encouraged her students to pursue professional careers in the music and acting industries, and she directed top choir groups for the Illinois Music Education Association. My mother influenced multiple generations of students to actualize their full potential and reach for their dreams. My mother enriched her community and enhanced the lives of those around her. My mother was and always will be EIU.

I never knew my mother's full impact on her community until she unexpectedly passed away in September of this year. During my mother's visitation, my family and I were greeted by countless numbers of my mother's former and current students and colleagues and members of our community. All of their lives had been touched by my mother, Robin. After listening to an ineffable amount of stories and witnessing an entire community mourn the loss of their beloved music teacher, I genuinely realized our responsibility as graduates of EIU.

As EIU alumni, our responsibility is to enrich our communities and enhance the lives of those around us. You have listened to my story and I encourage you to reflect on your own story and legacy. How will the chapters of your story unfold and inspire? What is your legacy for the next generation? Now is the time for all of us to launch the next chapter in our lives as civic-minded, socially responsible, culturally aware, and artistically appreciative community members who strive to enhance the lives of others. Celebrate the beginning of your new chapter, build your legacy, and never forget - we are and always will be EIU.