We Are the Free Musketeers

Three friends graduate together: Hyacinth Bewry (writer), Bellkiss Sappleton, and Jane Ranger-Cameron

by Hyacinth Bewry

For the past nine and a half years, I have been employed at West Hartford Health and Rehabilitation Center in Connecticut as a Certified Nursing Assistant working third shift, 11pm-7am. It is not an easy shift to work. There are times when I don't want to get out of my bed. I have to push myself at night to get going.

I chose this job because I don't have the de-

gree to go and work in one of those big law offices. They require a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree. So I had to choose the certified nursing assistant's job where the training program only went for six weeks. After that I knew I would be able to get a job, and I could be of help to the elderly residents who could not care for themselves the way they wanted to. Everyone cannot be a doctor, teacher,

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lawyer, nurse or dentist. Someone has to be there for the elderly people to care for them.

I am in school to make something better of my life. It is not easy going to school after I have worked all night. In the morning I have to rush home and take my son to school. After dropping him off, I go back home and get myself ready for class. It is very challenging for me trying to bal-

> ance a family of five, getting supper ready for them, getting all my house chores done, and then trying to get some sleep before I go to work. I don't know how I do it.

It is now one year and three months since my friend and I started this class (she works third shift with me at the nursing home) and I don't regret it one bit. At one point, my friend said that she was going to quit, and my teacher told her, "Over my dead body. You will do no such thing." I kept saying to her, "You have come too far to give up. Are you crazy, woman?" And she didn't quit.

We met a student who was in the program before us and due to certain difficulties she could only come irregularly to class. She works second and third shifts at a nursing home in the area. As I got to know her well, I became the "mother" for both of my classmates. I made sure I called them on the mornings we had class to say, "Come on. Let's go. It's not time to give up."

I know what it's like to procrastinate. I've done it a lot. I tried my best to encourage them.

I was not going to graduate and leave them behind. We were going to graduate and share the stage together, no matter what! And the three of us did graduate together with our high school diplomas on June 14, 2007!

In conclusion, whatever you decide you want to achieve, don't put it off. The longer you wait, the harder it becomes. The key to success is to work very hard. To my union, District 1199, a big thank you.

Hyacinth, Bellkiss, and Jane are members of the New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199, and are attending school at the 1199 Training Fund which offers adult education classes for 1199 members in Connecticut.

Did you know?

The Three Musketeers is a novel written by Alexandre Dumas in 1844. It tells the story of three inseparable friends who lived by the motto, "All for one and one for all." Write about a time in your life when this motto was relevant to you.

