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PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

Balancing priorities can be a challenge

How local community colleges help make it easier.

BY ERIN MARSHALL



Nicole Leever

No matter what your age, whether you are married or single, balancing priorities in life is not easy. Here, two women share how they are balancing work, school and family among other things to achieve their goals and reach for their dreams.

NICOLE LEEVER

Saddleback College sophomore Nicole Leever won a contest she didn't even know she had entered. Nicole is the photo editor for the Saddleback College student newspaper, *The Lariat*, and the only photographer on staff. Her series of surfing photos was chosen for the new Saddleback and Irvine Valley College summer marketing campaign. Hip, edgy and eye-catching, Nicole's photos appear on everything from college posters, t-shirts, and temporary tattoos to

graphics displays and a newsletter mailed throughout Orange County.

Energetic, ambitious and creative, Nicole is a double major in Business and Photography. The two majors allow her to combine her passion for photography with work. She first picked up a camera at age 10 and has not stopped taking photos since. With her new-found fame, her parents are taking her wish to combine photography with business much more seriously. "I am hearing from people I haven't heard from in years," exclaims Nicole. "This is also an addition to my portfolio I did not expect for some time to come!"

Nicole balances her studies at Saddleback College with her job as *The Lariat's* photo editor and her job as photo specialist at

Best Buy in Laguna Hills. "Balance is everything," she explains. "I prioritize my studies, photography, work, church and biking so I can fit it all in. It's not always easy, though."

Nicole chose Saddleback College after her sister attended the college. "Originally I looked at Orange Coast College, but I ultimately chose Saddleback. It's a good environment, easy to navigate and close to home," she says. "The teachers are excellent and close to the students." She plans to transfer to Chapman University and hopes one day to work for Canon USA, Inc. in marketing.

CINDY BARNES

Juggling five kids ages four to seventeen, school and work is not an easy job. Yet Irvine Valley College student Cindy Barnes manages to do it quite nicely. "It's a delicate balance getting everyone's needs met," she says, "but with the help of my husband and children, we get it done."

Cindy has been a veterinary technician for over ten years. She started attending Irvine Valley College to become certified in veterinary critical and emergency care. After examining what was needed for critical care, she decided to attend veterinary school. Cindy thrives on practicing veterinary medicine. She would like to attend Colorado State University and go on to become board certified in equine (horse) medicine and surgery.

Cindy feels that Irvine Valley College has allowed her to pursue her goal without sacrificing her family. "I

love that the college is intimate and I have been able to get to know my teachers," she expresses enthusiastically. "They have helped me become successful in my classes without taking time away from my husband and kids. I haven't had to sacrifice my ideals of being a stay-at-home mom to reach my goals."

She has also found the college's website to be a tremendous help. "It's streamlined and allows me to choose my classes and register with ease."

Cindy is also very involved in Irvine Valley College's Honors Program. Participation in the Honors Program will help her to stand out when applying to the University of California - Irvine and Colorado State University. She plans to attend UCI in spring 2006 to obtain her bachelor's degree, before moving onto Colorado State's veterinary school.

Saddleback College in Mission Viejo and Irvine Valley College in Irvine help students with financial assistance, career counseling, on-campus child care, distance learning programs, and much more. Information can be found at www.saddleback.edu or by calling 949-582-4500 and at www.ivc.edu or by calling 949-451-5100. tw



Cindy Barnes