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[Back](#)

Overcoming obstacles; Dyslexia doesn't hold down FVTC grad

By **Krista B. Ledbetter**

of *The Northwestern* December 10, 2006

Tina Krueger knew she had to swallow her pride.

"I just knew I was not going to quit," said Krueger, of Oshkosh. "I make mistakes, and sometimes keep making the same mistakes, but I become more and more aware of them."

It's Krueger's self confidence that brought her to where she stood Saturday afternoon – her graduation ceremony from Fox Valley Technical College, a place two years ago she least expected to be.

Krueger, 45, spent nearly 20 years working in the factory of OshKosh B'Gosh before her department shut down in 2004. Left without the job she knew and enjoyed, she made the decision to return to school. But one hurdle stood in her way – Krueger has dyslexia.

"I just didn't think I had the ability to go back to school," she said. "I have a disability, an inability to read and write. I didn't think I'd make it."

Krueger said she suffers from moderate to severe dyslexia, a disease that has made schooling difficult for as long as she can remember. Although she graduated from Neenah High School, her education wasn't easy.

"I did OK, I got by," she remembered. "But I don't know how I got by. (My teachers) probably couldn't read my papers. I read them now and think, 'What was I trying to say?'"

Her decision to enroll at FVTC in January 2005 was a leap of faith, and she proved she could land on the other side.

"It was a difficult two years," said Krueger, who attended FVTC full-time during the entirety of her enrollment. "I've worked all my life, so it was hard to think, 'This is my job. This is what I'm going to put my whole heart into.'"

On Saturday, the heart she put into earning her Associate's degree paid off, and she graduated from the marketing program with a 3.9 grade point average.

"I was here to learn something, to walk away from here with not just a grade or diploma, but with having learned, and being able to apply those things," she said.



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Tina Krueger is greeted by her mother-in law, Pat Krueger of Neenah, after the Fox Valley Technical College Winter Commencement at the Performing Arts Center in Appleton Saturday afternoon. Krueger went back to school to earn an associate degree in marketing after being laid off from working at OshKosh B'Gosh. *Northwestern photo by Laura May*

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Though it took Krueger extra time to complete and comprehend her class work, she said she was able to swallow her pride and ask for help.

Alice Heiden, FVTC Special Needs Support Instructor, is whom Krueger credits for her success over the past two years. But for Heiden, it's Krueger who overcame the odds.

"She came back to school very scared and nervous, but I've seen her grow by leaps and bounds into a very confident and wonderful woman," Heiden said.

With an Associate's degree in hand, Krueger doesn't have plans to leave it at that. In fact, she hopes to return to school yet again and earn her Bachelor's degree. She said she's been looking into various Bachelor programs, with the goal in mind to one day run her own sewing business.

"It's never too late. You still have a chance to fulfill anything," she said. "The desire to learn will always be there, and the desire to keep growing and keep going. It's hard, but there are so many people out there willing to help. You're not doing it alone."

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