

impact



MHPC Program Thrives

By Mary Tiernan

The Missouri Health Professions Consortium can be a life-changer for rural Missourians.

Devin Graf with her husband and their son Brady.

MHPC is a partnership among the University of Missouri School of Health Professions, five community colleges and a technical college throughout Missouri. The program uses distance education technology to deliver a two-year associates degree program in which students become certified occupational therapy or physical therapy assistants.

Devin Graf's son, Brady, was born with Arthrogryposis, a condition that causes stiff joints and abnormal muscles. She and her husband live in Carrollton, Missouri making it difficult and time consuming to drive Brady an hour and a half each way to Kansas City twice a week to get occupational, physical and speech therapy.

"It was miserable. Terrible. It seemed so unfair that there was nobody (near us) who could provide those services," said Graf.

After being in the finance field for almost nine years, Graf decided to enter the OTA program through MHPC. She attended her classes at State Fair Community College in Sedalia. Graf said the way learning has changed is remarkable.

"To have a teacher be sitting an hour and a half away teaching students and having them understand is amazing."

Her life has changed dramatically. Not only does she thoroughly enjoy what she does, she is able to help her son Brady in some ways on her own.

"For me to be able to provide services in the area, it means a lot to me," said Graf.

Lyndsey Williams graduated from MU in 2011 with a bachelor's in nutrition and fitness. She is a current student in the MHPC program because she was having trouble finding a job that allowed her to use her degree in a way she wanted and get paid well. She is excited to be earning a degree in a field where jobs are plentiful.

Williams is a proud MIZZOU graduate, but says the MHPC program is completely different than her undergraduate experience. She said, "The first day of class I was learning about specific things that will help me in my job later."

She highly recommends the program and claims it is worth all of the tears and sweat. However, it is not for people who want an easy way to make good money. It is hard work, but pays off for those who are genuinely interested in Occupational Therapy.

Williams is proud to say, "I feel like I have learned so much in just these few months that will already make me a better OTA in the future."



Tina Montgomery

Tina Montgomery, wanted to go back to school for occupational therapy, but raising a family presented some challenges to reaching her goal. After losing her mother to cancer and seeing what she went through, she knew it was time for a career change. Montgomery entered the MHPC program to become a certified occupational therapy assistant.

"It's a very well rounded program. It's hard, so it's not for the tender or lame of heart, or for the lazy," said Montgomery.

Both women now enjoy job security, happiness and the ability to raise their families on their own schedules.

Montgomery said, "The job market is steady. Even after more than a year out I'm still getting offers. It's just a field that needs people in it."

The partnership between the University of Missouri and the community colleges is a fairly unique model, but is proving successful. Program Director, Lea Brandt says the program is changing opportunities for options in education and for access to health care in rural areas of the state.

The program graduated 31 students in 2011, and the cohort that began in January 2012 boasts 47 students.

Want to learn more?

Go to <http://mhpc.missouri.edu/index.php>.