Katy Kruithoff

From 2004-2008, Katy Kruithoff was teaching courses in Medical Language and Medical Ethics in the Allied Health program at Kennebec Valley Community College. She enjoyed what she was doing yet before this experience had never imagined working as an educator. Though encouraged to get her master’s in nursing, Katy was energized by working with adult learners so this teaching experience prompted Katy to look for a graduate program that might be suitable to a role in health education. In Katy’s words. “I was on my yearly fall search for more education in some yet unknown subject area and fortunately fell into a life-changing conversation with a woman in the graduate office at USM. This led Katy to an adult education course that was meeting that very afternoon. Katy’s beginning was “serendipitous! “

According to Katy, “It was fun, exciting and stimulating to be back in the classroom because I could still learn and had not missed all my opportunities for growth and change.” Katy took a few classes before applying for admission and making the commitment to the program. This is something that is encouraged. Katy began the program when courses were offered on campus and completed the program when courses were all online. Katy says, “The online classes really forced me to develop communication skills. I had to learn how to think carefully about what I wanted to say and how to express myself clearly.

So much of the education world is based on higher levels of technology now. I am so glad there was the opportunity to learn about some of the newest programs. Camtasia, Elluminate, GotoMeetings are all in use out there - thank goodness I had some exposure.”

Currently Katy works at Maine Medical Center as a Project Manager in Medical Education. This significant career change was possible when Katy was asked to stay on at her internship site after graduation. For her internship in the program, Katy worked in the office of the Department of Medical Education at Maine Medical Center and with the Standardized Patient Program. Katy says, “I feel very fortunate that I have been able to continue to gain experience working in this field. “ Katy’s work varies depending on the projects she is working on and who she is working with. In the busy field of health care, many weeks she makes her plans around other peoples scheduled availability which has its advantages and challenges. According to Katy, “This allows me great flexibility and at the same time requires me
to be very self-disciplined with my time. Typically I have four projects going and spend most of my time doing research and planning related to these projects.

The Adult and Higher Education program provided Katy with an “on ramp” to enter this new field. Katy says, “Being in the student role allowed me greater flexibility to take risks.” She learned some very practical, useable skills, for example, communicating effectively online, writing an executive summary, facilitating small and large group discussions, honing research skills such as evaluating research and writing an annotated bibliography and applying to an Institutional Review Board for permission to do human subject research. As result of being in the program, Katy is more comfortable trying something new, willing to fool around with it and make changes and doesn’t have a sense of paralysis when something goes wrong such as with technology.

Personal gains from being in the program really stand out for Katy. The process of writing her learning autobiography was an epiphany. Katy realized, “I knew very little about myself. I was very surprised by what I learned through my own learning history - that one assignment was such an introspective journey of self discovery.” She adds, “Going through the program had a calming effect on me - it could be a greater sense of self confidence from setting a goal and reaching that goal or just knowing I had found a comfortable place as an adult learner amongst many other adult learners.” She realizes how much it benefits you to understand yourself as a learner when you become the educator.

While Katy expected to read books and do a lot of writing as part of her graduate experience, she was surprised by how often the assignments offered opportunities to be out in the community putting theory into action and learning experientially. Katy says, “In retrospect, this was valuable to me as it helped force my physical transition from seeing myself in a nursing role to seeing my future as an educator in the field of health care.” Her credentials - Catherine Kruthoff, M.S. Ed, RN – highlight the education needed in her work at Maine Medical Center.

As she continues in her new career, Katy plans to keeps the following in mind. “Educators are not and cannot be all-knowing and adult development and maturation does not end with college graduation.”

For more information about the USM Adult Education program please contact Graduate Admission at (207) 780-4386 or visit www.usm.maine.edu/sehd/adult-education/