



News Release

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Century College's Outstanding Nursing Student Had Whole Family Behind Her

When Jessica Brunotte, Century College's Outstanding Nursing Student for 2008, accepts her diploma from Century College this Friday at Aldrich Arena, her cheering section will include her husband, Jamie, who has worked two jobs - some 90 hours a week – to help put her through college.

“He gets up every day at 2:50 a.m. and unloads airplanes for hours before his regular job as an architectural draftsman so that my kids and I can have medical benefits,” said Brunotte, a Maplewood resident. “I am so grateful for his support.”

Brunotte, too, has worked very hard to earn her nursing degree with a perfect 4.0 grade point average not only to fulfill her personal dream, but also to make a better life for her and Jamie's three children, Matthew, 10, Jada, 9, and Sean, 5.

Brunotte originally had planned to become a lawyer, but she decided to become a registered nurse after a personal tragedy rocked her life. Brunotte's first husband, John Harthan, from whom she was divorced, died of acute lymphocytic leukemia at age 26.

“It was a shocking experience,” said Brunotte. “But the nurses were so great and helped my family so much, I thought, “This is what I have to do. I want to have a purpose in life. This is what I want to do.”

Though she had already earned her two-year degree from Century in 2006, she went back to the college and enrolled in the nursing program.

“I am so excited,” said Brunotte. “In 2006, I looked at the nursing graduates and thought, “That’s going to be me in two years.”

Brunotte worked part time as a hospital health unit coordinator most of the time she was also going to school full time and taking care of her three children. “It will be nice not to be that busy ever again,” said Brunotte. “Those 8 a.m. Saturday microbiology classes were pretty tough after working until midnight the night before. As long as my kids can remember, I have been in school.”

The oldest of Pastor Denny and Francie McGrane’s seven children, Brunotte grew up poor wearing donated clothes with little money for anything but the essentials. “It instilled in me the ethic of hard work,” said Brunotte. “Jamie grew up the same way. Now he is the kind of dad who can shop for the kids’ school clothes as well as do their hair. He’s just a Renaissance guy, and my biggest supporter. He’s really kept me going.”

After graduation, Brunotte will take the national nursing licensure exam, and then she has a job as a registered nurse waiting for her at Gillette Children’s Hospital in the pediatric intensive care unit. She starts work June 23.

Because her nursing job has health benefits, Jamie soon will be able to quit his second job, no longer getting up in the wee hours of the morning to unload airplanes. “We will have a more sane life,” said Brunotte. “I’m really looking forward to that.”

At age 30, Brunotte sometimes asks herself what it would have been like if she had gone into nursing in her early 20s. “The truth is, I know I will be a better nurse now than I would have been when I was

younger,” said Brunotte. “Now I know what it’s like to have your heart broken. I know what it’s like to have someone close to you die. And I know what it’s like to be extremely busy. I feel like I can do anything now. It’s a powerful feeling.”



Photo: Century Nursing student Jessica Brunotte



Photo: The Brunotte family at the Outstanding Student reception, left to right, front row, Matthew Brunotte, Sean Brunotte, Jada Harthan. Back row: Joyce McGrane, Jamie Brunotte, Jessica Brunotte, Dennis McGrane, Francie McGrane.