



St. Rita Graduate Roberta Keller

Roberta Kaufmann was only three years old when she began preschool at St. Rita School for the Deaf. At that time she probably devoted very little energy trying to decide what she would be when she grew up. After all, those are tough questions. Kids should at least wait until they're three and a half to make such important decisions. Roberta doesn't remember exactly when she knew she wanted to become a teacher. But for her, the decision came easy. Her ride with St. Rita began over thirty-two years ago, and it's still going. The student is now the teacher. And her success is the greatest lesson of all.

Roberta grew up in Cincinnati with a Deaf Family. At age three and half she began living in the dorm with her sister. Roberta remembers how difficult it was leaving her parents for four days. Every Friday she would run to her parents and hug them, excited to

be going home with them for the weekend. Reminiscing about dorm life brought back a few mischievous smiles. Good clean fun providing memories to last a lifetime. One of her fondest memories is decorating the school gym for Prom with the rest of her Junior Class. She said the decorations were wonderful and she was proud to have been a part of it. Another favorite time was traveling to Kentucky to go caving with Sister Bernadette Marie and other students. Roberta definitely kept busy in school. She played volleyball, basketball, was a cheerleader, and even found time to participate in the Spring dramas.

Roberta was lucky to have a supportive family while attending St. Rita. Her parents were involved in her life and encouraged her to continue learning. After graduating from St. Rita in 1985 she went on to study at Gaulladet University. In 1990 she earned her Bachelor's degree in Child Development and came away with many rich experiences and a greater understanding of the Deaf Culture. After completing her degree at Gaulladet she came back to St. Rita School and worked as a resident Advisor. Looking back, she believes St. Rita taught her some important life lessons. She said, "St. Rita taught me to be responsible for myself at home, at work, and in my studies. I learned how to take care of myself."

Success means different things to different people. To Roberta, success means creating goals for yourself and doing everything possible to reach those goals. Completing a Master's degree in Deaf Education is the next goal on Roberta's list. She hopes to be finished this summer so she can begin a ten-week internship. Her focus will be on language development. She wants to emphasize to parents of deaf and hard of hearing children the importance of communication. "Parents should work with their children on language development at a very early age and there are many ways to do that."

If asked, she will tell you her ultimate goal is to become a teacher and help deaf kids. If asked, most people will say she accomplished that goal a long time ago. For over twelve years Roberta has worked with students at St. Rita. She brings with her an aura of dedication, patience, and love while working with the young children in preschool. It's the little things that help her realize just how much she loves her job. "Like when a three year old gives me a hug and tells me they're glad I'm their teacher, I know I've made a connection. I know my work is important." But she has also been a teacher and a friend to many older students as well. Offering encouragement, support, and advice during many occasions.

