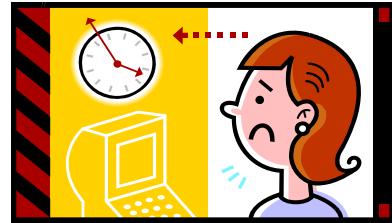


## You are Never Too Old to Learn

by Mary Jo Knight

As one of the older students at PHCC (maybe the oldest), I have found you are never too old to learn.

I never planned to be a college student. I never even planned to be a high school graduate; that was one of the first major problems in my life, I hadn't planned anything. I just lived life as it came and went. I became a high-school dropout at the early age of sixteen. Before my twenty-first birthday, I was a married uneducated mother of four children.



Life just came and went as we raised all the children to adults. I am so sorry to say we had not planned much on their education either, and most of them became high-school dropouts, too.

Then one day (my hair had already turned gray), I made a plan to return to school and study for my GED. With one of my dropped-out daughters by my side, she and I proudly signed up at our local high school to attend GED classes. I was very apprehensive; could I really do this...at my age? But, after months of study and lots of encouragement from my family and instructors, I tested and received my GED certificate, and to my astonishment, with the highest scores in the class.

I was elated and very proud that I and one of my daughters had gotten our GED certificates. I never had any other thoughts or plans for a higher education. Never in my life had I ever thought about going to college. But if you do not make plans for your future, life itself will. At the age of sixty-one, after working for a company for many years, it closed its doors (due to NAFTA), and I was given the opportunity through the Trade Act Program to further my education. This was a very trying time in my life, and many questions were lurking in my mind. At my age should I really try to go to college, or should I just try to find another job? Would I be able to find another job? Could I really handle being a college student at my age? Could I keep up with the young students? How would they feel about an old gray-headed woman in their classes? Also, all I knew about computers was how to turn one on, and all the keyboarding I knew was the "hunt and peck" with a one finger technique. But my biggest concern was my ability to remember. Just as the years had slipped by, so had my ability to remember.

*Could I really handle being a college student at my age? Could I keep up with the young students?*

With the encouragement of my family and college personnel, I was assured that I could further my education. So with my head held high and dragging a "book-bag on wheels," I was roaming the halls of PHCC on the first day of the 2005 Spring semester with all the other students, some fresh out of high school and some almost as old as me, looking for our class rooms. I was really surprised at the diversity at the college, and how everyone was there to learn and didn't pay any attention to who you were or how you looked.

In three weeks I will proudly walk across the stage in a cap and gown at PHCC to receive my certificate of accomplishment in Clerical Studies. It has not been easy, but it is one of the most rewarding things I have done in my life. And one very important thing that I have learned is, "You are never too old to learn." ✿

