

Education vacation

Teachers leave families, homes to earn doctorates in education from A&M

Melissa Sorola-Bilano
The Battalion

Esther Buckley is a high school physics teacher, but this summer the table has been turned, and Buckley is now a student.

Buckley and nine others from Laredo are attending classes this summer toward their doctorate degrees as part of a collaborative effort with Texas A&M in College Station and Texas A&M International University.

Buckley has taught for 30 years and spent the last 18 years teaching at Dr. Leo Cigarroa High School in Laredo. Buckley is now working on her doctorate in education curriculum and instruction.

Buckley said her life as a teacher is not much different than her life as a student.

"As a teacher, you are constantly reading and looking for better ways for your students to learn," Buckley said.

As a student, Buckley said she has a different focus.

"It's been a good experience to sit in the student's seat," Buckley said.

Along with the challenges of being back in school, many in the group are separated from loved ones.

Buckley, a mother of seven and grandmother of three, said she is lucky her family is supportive.

"They are very encouraging," Buckley said. "They have all picked up my goals, so very frequently I will hear them talking

about getting their Ph.Ds. They have established long-term goals that parallel mine," Buckley said.

Buckley said she thinks it is important for teachers to keep learning.

"Getting a masters, getting a Ph.D. is not going to give you a lot more money, but knowing that you have reached that level of understanding, knowing that you are capable of that level of studying, is something very costly to teachers," Buckley said.

George Anne Reuthinger is another teacher from Laredo working to complete her doctorate in curriculum and instruction.

Reuthinger credits her family for being supportive of her and said her cell phone has aided in keeping tabs on her son and husband.

"Laredo is the cell phone capital of Texas," Reuthinger said. "Most of us have cell phones and email which we use to keep in touch."

Buckley said instant messenger services have helped her communicate with her family and said she will chat with three to four of her children nightly via Instant Messenger.

Reuthinger's role as a mother adds to the complexity of her situation.

"I am here studying, but my mind is also on my son taking an algebra class at the university in Laredo," Reuthinger said. "My mind is concentrating on two places and responsibilities at once."

Personal goals and the hope to

inspire others is motivating Reuthinger to complete her dream. Reuthinger said she hopes her experience at A&M will serve as an example to those in Laredo, a border town with a majority Hispanic population.

"I applied (to the Ph.D. program) because I am Hispanic, and

"Kids, who are bilingual and are raised in homes with incomes below the poverty line, need to know that there will be mountains to overcome in their lives, but the mountains can be climbed."

— George Anne Reuthinger
doctoral candidate

I am a woman," Reuthinger said.

"Kids who are bilingual and are raised in homes with incomes below the poverty line need to know that there will be mountains to overcome in their lives, but the mountains can be climbed," Reuthinger said. "I need to be a role model to students in Laredo. They need to see that a Laredo girl who was raised in neighborhoods like the ones they live in can achieve educationally. They need to know that it is possible."

The first in her family to

earn her master's degree, Reuthinger not only hopes to influence the community but her family as well.

"With God's help, I will also be the first (in my family) to obtain a Ph.D.," Reuthinger said.

"It is my hope that others, not only in my family, but other educators in Laredo will follow my lead."

Callaway House is home to Reuthinger during her stay here, and she said, while the accommodations are nice, it is not the same as being at her home in Laredo.

"I would be dishonest if I didn't say that I miss the lakes at our ranch and my swimming pool and cats," Reuthinger said. "Callaway has no cats."

Deborah Allred-Mallon, another teacher from Laredo, can relate to missing the comforts of home.

Allred-Mallon, who is working on her doctorate in education, is the mother of two daughters and said it has been difficult being away from them.

"My daughters have slowly adjusted to having their father play 'Mr. Mom,'" Allred-Mallon said. "It has been extremely difficult because they don't quite understand why their mom has to be away for so long," she said.

The possibility to influence her children to pursue their education keeps Allred-Mallon optimistic.

"I think that although my children are young, my experiences and accomplishments will serve

as an example of determination," Allred-Mallon said.

"My parents were not college graduates," Allred-Mallon said. "However, they instilled in their children that education was the great equalizer. They always stressed education would bring opportunities that they were never given. I hope to instill in my own children the very same ideals."

In the About.com article, "Earn a Top Diploma at Any Age," Carole S. Fungaroli, author of *Traditional Degrees for Nontraditional Students: How to Earn a Diploma from America's Great Colleges at Any Age*, advises adults returning to college to seek degrees from prestigious universities.

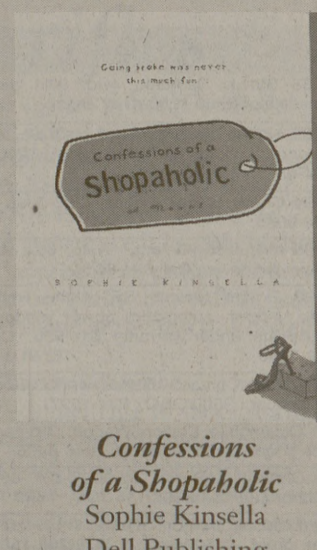
Access to the best resources, learning from the best professors and the potential for better employment recruiting are reasons Fungaroli recommends choosing larger, well-known establishments.

Fungaroli also advises taking courses in a classroom setting on campus rather than through distance learning because students will benefit from interaction with other students and professors.

Many adults, Fungaroli said, have doubts about succeeding in college.

"The major factor keeping most adults outside the gates of a great state university is the resistance in their own minds," Fungaroli said.

"Once you see yourself as a potential candidate for admission, you'll be halfway to your goal."



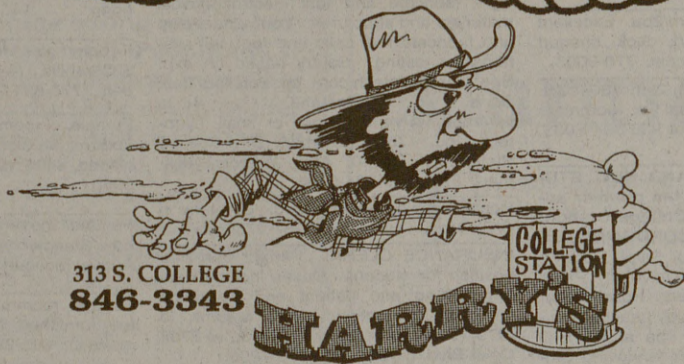
Confessions of a Shopaholic
Sophie Kinsella
Dell Publishing

Sophie Kinsella has proved herself a gifted and talented writer. Her first novel, *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, has found its way onto the Globe and Mail's National Bestseller List alongside authors Stephen King, John Grisham, Danielle Steel and Amy Tan.

For students who look forward to filling out credit card applications by Fish Pond every fall or simply enjoying spending the entire weekend at the mall, *Confessions of a Shopaholic* provides familiar scenarios.

Kinsella's heroine, Rebecca Bloomwood, is a financial journalist who should know how to save and spend wisely. Unfortunately, she finds herself with a pile of letters from banks

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