

PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

Making dreams come true

Local community colleges provide a host of opportunity.

BY ERIN MARSHALL

Everyone longs for success: meeting their goals and having their dreams come true. For some, opportunities for success come early and for others, later in life. Through education and determination, two vastly different women are making their dreams come true.



Vanessa's passion for the hoops fuels her education goals.

Vanessa Dominguez

Eighteen year-old Irvine Valley College freshman Vanessa Dominguez is using basketball to obtain an education. A graduate of Mission Viejo High School, Dominguez was recruited by IVC's women's basketball coach Julie Hanks who emphasized the importance of the program as well as the education she can earn.

Dominguez comes from a household where athletics are a family affair, but pursuing a higher education is more important. Her mother is a pharmacist and her father is an engineer. Her older sister, a student at California State University – Los

Angeles, is on the track team. Dominguez also has three younger siblings that she hopes will continue in their footsteps.

Dominguez sees education as an essential step to achieving goals. "You never know where life is going to take you and education always backs you up," she says. One possible career path she is considering is sports medicine.

Coach Hanks says Dominguez is the kind of student who "makes you want to coach and teach. She is committed both to her studies and to basketball and she knows how to have fun with them."

Dominguez is comfortable at IVC. "The people are friendly and the teachers are always willing to help you." For her, IVC is an environment where she can concentrate on basketball, yet stay balanced with academics. She was recently selected as an all-Orange Empire Conference first team player and is one of the leading scorers in the state. Her basketball skills and talent could lead to a scholarship with a top university. Dominguez says no matter what happens with her basketball career, she will still pursue her goal of a college education. "I won't give up on that."

Farzaneh Farhand

Farzaneh Farhand moved to the U.S. from Iran 25 years ago. Where at one time she was faced with learning a new language and culture, and overcoming an abusive marriage, now she is a single mom with a mission. Today, at the age of 48, Farhand is in her last semester at Saddleback College pursuing her dream of becoming a licensed family and marriage therapist. There is very little she allows to stand in her way, including her age. "Age doesn't matter. The more focused you are on your goals, the more you can achieve. Know where you are going and your path will open up for you."

And achieve she has. Farhand started school after separating from her husband with no clear goals and no money for books. With the help of an "incredible" guidance counselor, Farhand was able to find the money she needed and to set goals, mapping out a strategy through school. "My counselor, Sholeh, has an open door policy. She has always encouraged me and kept me on my path, one step at a time."

Farhand is pursuing her goals with determination, confidence and a warm sense of humor. She plans to obtain bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in Psychology and Human Services. She believes her story and experiences can benefit other women like her. "Going to school was my rescue. Also, being successful is the best revenge for those who try to hold you back," she says.



A single mom with a new mission, Farzaneh is well on the path to achieving her goal.

Farhand believes her experience at Saddleback College has opened up new avenues for her. She relates better to other people and can encourage them by her example. Through patience, the guidance of faculty and staff, and just plain hard work, Farhand is meeting her goals and making her dreams come true.

Saddleback College in Mission Viejo and Irvine Valley College in Irvine are both part of the South Orange County Community College District. The colleges help students with financial assistance, career counseling, on campus child care, distance learning programs, and much more.

Information about Saddleback College can be found at www.saddleback.edu or by calling 949-582-4500 and Irvine Valley College can be found at www.ivc.edu or by calling 949-451-5100. **tw**

Today's Woman Magazine would like to give recognition to Marilyn Radenovic for her contribution in the last issue. The article "A second chance" should have listed her name in the byline as an author. Her account of Jennifer Clark returning to school and pursuing her dreams was much appreciated.

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