

Making Dreams Come True NDNU Grad Completes Degree at Age 91

With this issue, we are delighted to feature Rosemary E. Finnerty as this month's alumni spotlight and to introduce our Hallmark series beginning with "The importance of creating community among those with whom we work and with those we serve."

Rosemary E. Finnerty graduated from NDNU two years ago with a bachelor's degree in intensive human services. She was 91 at the time, and getting her degree "was something I had always dreamed of doing." In addition to graduating Summa Cum Laude, Rosemary was recognized by her professors with the "Inspirational Academic Excellence Award" for the Class of 2020. (See related article at <https://www.ndnu.edu/ndnu-honors-91-year-old-graduate-rosemary-e-finnerty>).

A New Jersey native, Rosemary is the seventh of eight children and the only one with a college degree. Shortly after earning her AA degree, Rosemary retired from the Colgate Palmolive Company with full benefits after working 36 years as an executive assistant. She traveled to California in 1983 to visit a friend and decided to stay. "I had two dreams," she explains, "getting my bachelor's degree and pursuing acting, the latter since I had been in so many community theatre productions back in New Jersey."

Although Rosemary immediately applied to and was accepted into the NDNU program, she waited until she was free of responsibilities, starting her classes in Spring 2015 at the age of 86. "I had a wonderful experience at NDNU," says Rosemary. "I was immediately accepted by my classmates and had great teachers who encouraged and supported me all the way to the finish."

A devout Franciscan, Rosemary credits her longevity to the work she is doing to instill faith among those seeking a divine purpose and bringing people of all backgrounds and traditions together. "God led me to NDNU and the NDNU community."

"Rosemary is a wonderful example of an individual who is not afraid of moving forward no matter what the age," says Dr. Gregory White, Provost and Senior Vice President, NDNU. "Her story may encourage other older adults to go back to school and succeed." *Editor's Note: Starting in September, NDNU will launch two bachelor's degree completion programs – one in Psychology and the other in Business Administration – in partnership with several local community colleges.*

And about that acting career, Rosemary has chalked up many performances as an extra in television shows and movies such as Edtv, How to Commit Murder, High Crimes and Miami Vice. Talk about persevering and making one's dreams come true!

Here are some words of wisdom from a most remarkable woman:

The importance of lifelong education: “If you don’t want to get old or bored, go back to school. If you want to have a full life, and even an extraordinary one, go back to school. I did not think I could do it, especially with the pandemic, but I did.”

What’s so special about NDNU: “I loved the teachers and the sense of community, I felt so comfortable and at home. And of course, riding through the hills on your way to classes – the views take your breath away.”

And, our NDNU Hallmark of the Month - **The importance of creating community among those with whom we work and with those we serve:** “Community is a big theme in my life. I love drawing people out, especially those who are shy. Bringing people together is part of my calling, and quite possibly why I’ve lived such a long and blessed life. Accepting people’s differences and loving them unconditionally is at the core of my spirit and a reflection of my faith.”