

WOL Graduate Nominated for Career College Association's Graduate Recognition for Excellence, Achievement & Talent (GREAT) Award

by Andrea Spridgen

Westwood College Online Graduate Peggy Shields was recently honored with a nomination for the Career College Association's GREAT award. Shields was one of only 80 graduates nominated for the award this year. This award recognizes graduates who have excelled academically or have displayed extraordinary talent in their fields and who have overcome the obstacles to achieve their educational dreams. Simply being nominated for this award sets Peggy apart as a truly exceptional graduate. Harris Miller, president and CEO of the Career College Association, recognized that quality in a letter to Peggy following her nomination, "Please accept my sincere appreciation for all of your hard work, sacrifice and dedication... Yours is a truly inspiring personal success story."

We wanted to share with you some of Peggy's achievements and struggles to help you understand what makes her special. Her educational story begins with the life events that caused her to seek out WOL and pursue her degree in web design and multimedia. Several years before her enrollment at WOL, Peggy had been accepted to a business degree program 45 miles from her home but decided to delay her dreams of higher education due to the commute which was very likely to worsen her fibromyalgia symptoms.

Then after her employer experienced a downturn that resulted in layoffs, job cuts and reorganization, Peggy, not knowing how she might be affected, began once again thinking about how she could improve her career future by pursuing a degree. This time, however, her focus was on taking what had begun as a hobby and turning it into a full-time career. Shields started Projects by Peggy, her own web design business, in 2003 when she gained her first paying client. She felt that a degree in web design and multimedia would increase her skills and provide additional validation of her professionalism as a web designer. That's when she found WOL. Because of her fibromyalgia condition, Peggy



felt that going to school online would be the best option to meet her unique needs. She chose WOL because the instructors were experienced professionals, the school used industry standard software, the schedule was flexible, and they offered tuition-free retraining for graduates.

Throughout her academic career at WOL, Peggy demonstrated excellence by making the dean's list, being chosen for membership in the Alpha Beta Kappa Honor Society, holding a leadership position in the Student Senate and serving as a web design tutor. She is currently a full-time web development business owner and active in the Central Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce. As a WOL graduate, she is also dedicated to aiding students embarking on their own career journeys by volunteering to present Climbing with the Experts workshops on her field. Additionally, Peggy was recently recognized as the Volunteer of the Year by her local chamber of commerce for applying her design talents to redesign their website.

To learn more about Peggy and view her work, please visit her website at www.projectsbypeggy.com.