

Debra Ann Amaro is Upper Mohawk of the Bear clan.

In 1980 Debra completed a Diploma in Nursing at St. Clair College in Windsor. In 2001 she returned to the University of Windsor to complete her bachelor of Nursing Degree. In 2003 Debra continued her studies at Wayne State University in Detroit where she obtained her Masters in Community Nursing. She is currently completing a Teaching Certificate in Nursing at Wayne State University as well as teaching nursing students at the Henry Ford Community College in Michigan.

Debra's first major accomplishment was returning to school after dropping out of high school in grade 10 and raising her son as a single mother. Her accomplishments continued with her education. While attending the University of Windsor, a paper she wrote with two other nurses was published in a British Medical Journal. While at Wayne State University Debra was

inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Honour Society of Nursing which accepts only those who have achieved academic excellence of a GPA greater than 3.55.

When Debra first started in the nursing program in 1980 she faced the major challenge of the roles of student and single mother. She received assistance for daycare and living expenses through social services and received student grants/loans without which she never would have been able to return to school as a young mother. Debra knows **"it is very important to seek out as much assistance as you can because this will make your journey more comfortable and less stressful. Continually look for grants or bursaries that will aid in your educational endeavours. Utilize any student services that are offered by any institution because these are free and will assist you."**

In addition to financial challenges, Debra felt left out being a single mom and a few

years older than the other students. But, she always told herself that she was **just as smart as they were and to always keep an open mind**. She realized early on that **those students were no different than she and that everyone was embarking on something new**.

Debra's principles are simple: **"Believe in yourself, have faith and realize the only limits we have are those we place on ourselves. We all have gifts and we must set out a plan of action or goals to reach our potential. Strive to do your best because there are many rewards at the end.**

To contribute to the community and society Debra sees herself as being a **positive role model** for young single moms and those nurses that are fearful of returning to school for a higher level education. She is also a **strong advocate** for improving health care and accessing programs for under serviced or marginalized populations.

A key challenge that Debra feels needs to be addressed with the youth today is education. **"The youth today live for today without considering the consequences for tomorrow."** This must change. "We must have **mentors** in every community that are willing to work with youth. Offer more educational programs for our children at an earlier age."

The advice that she gives to young people who are making decisions for their futures is to **"Believe in yourself and what you do. Set goals and achieve one at a time. Don't look for an easy way because there is none. The only way you become successful is by working at it. Use every opportunity that comes your way to improve yourself or expand your knowledge. Knowledge is what gives us power."**

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