

A Family Affair: MetroWest Mom, Daughter Graduate Together

One graduated college, the other graduated high school and both are on the path to become nurses.

By [Samantha Mercado, Patch Staff](#) | Jun 10, 2019 3:40 pm ET

FRAMINGHAM, MA — It's been a long road to graduation day for Jill Cotter. She navigated through higher education on and off for six years. She graduated from Quinsigamond Community College's LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) program in May — just in time to wear a cap and gown with her daughter, who graduated from Ashland High School in June. Both Cotter and her daughter want to be nurses.

Cotter, 47, and her daughter, Janelle, live in Ashland. Cotter said she was born and raised in Framingham.

"I come from a big Framingham family," Cotter said.

Growing up, Cotter attended Keefe Technical High School but dropped out at the age of 16. "The teachers were great and there were so many people supporting me and trying to get me to stay. I just wanted to start working," she said.

In the following years, Cotter said she struggled with addiction. A few years before her two children were born, Cotter got clean and stayed clean.

"I've been clean for 26 years now," she said.

Cotter started her journey slowly by obtaining her GED and taking a few college courses. She said it was especially hard to relearn some subjects.

"It's hard because when you leave school at 16, that's where your learning foundation is ... I had to retake math a few times," she said.

While her classes were progressing well, Cotter still had two young children that needed her attention and she put school on the back burner for a few years.

Once her children were tweens, she went back to school, this time with her sights set on a nursing degree. Cotter said she always enjoyed working in the medical field with home healthcare companies but wanted to earn her degree and become a registered nurse.

Throughout her journey, Cotter said her mother was incredibly supportive. In 2017, her mother's health started to decline as she struggled with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). Cotter was already enrolled in nursing school and had paid for three semesters, but stopped it all to take care of her mother.

"I never told her I stopped school, she wouldn't have wanted me to," Cotter said. Her mother was placed in hospice and moved into Cotter's home to spend her last month surrounded by her family. She died at the age of 77.

"My mom was my everything, she was my rock," Cotter said. In her mother's honor, she went back to school — this time for the last time — and got her LPN degree. Cotter dedicated her graduation cap to her mother, with photos of her spread throughout and the phrase "I did it Mommie," at the top. She posted a photo of her grad cap on the [Framingham Patch Neighbor](#) page.

Cotter said the only thing that made her graduation sweeter was knowing that her daughter was graduating high school and following in her footsteps to study nursing. Her daughter Janelle will attend Worcester State University in the fall.

"I was so proud and emotional — to see her life so different than mine," Cotter said of her daughter. "She's so smart, she joked in my graduation card that one day she could be my boss and she really could."

After some well-deserved celebration time, Cotter said she will be hitting the books once again. She has another year left before she graduates as a registered nurse. She is taking evening classes while juggling her home healthcare job. Cotter said she hopes to work as a nursing teacher, specifically for home care agencies.

"The way the nurses cared for my mother was just incredible, I was astonished," she said. She wants to make sure all nurses give that same kind of care, whether it comes from her or her daughter.