

Raynham mother finally has some free

By KAREN CURBIE
Gazette Staff Writer

Denise L. Rivers of Raynham is finally taking a vacation.

"I haven't had this much free time in a long time," said the 34-year-old single mother of two. "I only have to work a 40-hour week now. I have time to sleep."

Ms. Rivers, who graduated from southeastern Massachusetts University last year with a bachelor of science degree in nursing, spent seven years working the 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. shift in Rhode Island Hospital's Trauma unit, while attending school during the day.

She still works the same hospital schedule, but this year she held a part-time position as an evening nursing instructor at Bristol County Community College Fall River which means she has more free time this summer.

A 1973 graduate of the Bristol-Vocational Regional



DENISE L. RIVERS
Three-step dream

Technical School nursing program in 1973, the school's first nursing class to graduate, she decided to

return to school in 1978 after a divorce, and with two sons to take care of. She had been working in the nursing profession as a licensed practical nurse for 12 years.

"I decided nursing was the profession I wanted to pursue," she said.

After graduating cum laude from Fall River's Bristol Community College in 1981 with an associate degree in Nursing, she continued on to get her bachelor's degree with honors of distinction, and with dean's list standing.

"It was easier at SMU," she said. "The boys were in school during the day, but if I had a class until 4:00 or 5:00 p.m., I needed help from friends to get the younger one off the bus."

"The college now offers courses for retired adult students at times convenient for mothers," she con- wene in school. It was easy with electives, but sometimes I

couldn't do that with the courses finished. "I would go through the school course book and plan my schedule around the time the kids required for my major."

Although she was doing what she wanted, she admits it wasn't easy.

"When I got so exhausted I couldn't study, I'd sit down, have a good cry, pull the covers over my head, and sleep for 12 hours," she said.

It was hard for her sons, William, age 14, and Jayme, age 8, sometimes, too.

"I've always discussed with the kids what I want, what they want,

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and how we can work together," she said. "For example, my boys wanted to go on vacation to Disneyworld. A teaching position became available at Bristol Community College for a part-time evening nursing instructor.

"I told my boys, 'If I take the position, I will have to work seven days a week, but in the end we will go to Disney.'"

"We leave Sunday," she said.

She advises single mothers with a same desire for a career in nursing to be patient.

"Set short term goals and be very patient," she said. "One of the hardest things, once I was determined to do this, was it was frustrating because I couldn't afford to do it full time. That meant it would take me longer. Work towards short term goals, and have the patience to realize it will take time."

Her education did not end with her bachelor's degree.

"I've been accepted to graduate school at Anna Maria College in Paxton, Mass.," she said, "and in September I will begin working towards my master of science degree in nursing with a double major in patient education and nursing management."

She won't be satisfied with a master's degree.

Researcher credits diet, medicine for increases in life expectancy

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (UPI) — The average American life expectancy increased by about three years during the past two decades and could jump by four more years before the end of the century, a Yale University researcher

said. Dr. Adrian M. Ostfeld has credited advances in diet and medicine with the dramatic increase in longevity.

It's taken thousands of years in the past to increase life expectancy by three years," he told about 100 people at a Yale conference on health prospects for older Americans.

Ostfeld, who began studying the habits and health problems of 2,812 senior citizens from New Haven in 1981, said his research puts the average life expectancy of an American male at 70, while women will live to 78.

"People apparently are living healthier, physicians are doing a good job treating and coronary care units are saving lives," he said. "This is essentially true for the whole United States."

Improvements in the prevention and treatment of heart attacks and strokes, a drop in smoking

this summer by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"Older and middle-aged people are having substantially fewer heart attacks and strokes, and are more likely to survive when they do," Ostfeld said, adding that women are the key to improving the health of family members.

"In more than 70 percent of our cases, women made the doctors appointments, reminded husbands to fill their prescriptions, put pills in the right place and fixed meals according to diet," he said.

psychological and social factors that can improve the health of an elderly person are having a child living within 50 miles or at least two good friends, as well as believing and participating in a religion.

He said what continues to remain a mystery is why women in the United States outlive men by seven to eight years.

"That's a very, very hard problem to understand," Ostfeld said. "You could either say it's biological or to some extent social and behavioral," he said.

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