One of the goals of a college education is the cultivation of lifelong learning, and two of our graduating seniors, Donna Coufal and Deb Sieradski, epitomize that ideal. After enjoying long, successful careers, they chose to return to school and begin a new chapter of their lives.

When Donna Coufal began her career over forty years ago, computers were not nearly as prevalent as they are today. So she could not have anticipated that one day she’d be receiving a college degree in networking technology. Nevertheless, after five semesters of hard work and dedication, that day has arrived.

Donna had been out of school for 42 years, and retired for seven, when she made the decision to start again as a college student. Looking back, the seeds for this perhaps surprising decision may have been sown back in the mid-1990s, when the Coufal family purchased its first personal computer. She would call customer support when a problem or glitch emerged, and became fascinated by what she was learning.

Meanwhile, her employer, the surgical needle company B. G. Sulze in Mattydale, became computerized over the years that Donna was working there. Officially a machine operator, she found herself teaching her supervisor how to operate a computer. Donna may have identified a new talent and interest, but she was too busy with her job and family to seriously contemplate a career change.

In May 2007, the owners of B. G. Sulze made the decision to close the company and Donna’s job was eliminated. Eventually, she decided “I wanted to learn more about networking.” She was familiar with Bryant & Stratton already, since her daughter Debra had attended. Finally, for the first time in her life, Donna Coufal

“I love it here. I’m going to miss it.”

Donna Coufal
Donna became a college student in the fall of 2015. At first, Donna was unsure of herself and her decision: “Do you know how many times I wanted to quit?” Luckily, her teachers were always willing to answer her questions and encourage her to keep going. “I loved all the instructors,” she says. “I could go to any of them.”

In addition to the encouragement she received from the faculty and staff, Donna relied on the sense of dedication and responsibility she gained from years in the workforce. “I think it would have bothered me to quit,” she says. Donna advises other students “to be dedicated, to push for what you want.”

Eventually, Donna became an even more familiar presence on campus when she completed her internship in Syracuse North’s IT department. It was an experience she cherished. “I felt useful,” she says. “I felt needed.”

What Donna says she’ll remember most about Bryant & Stratton is “how great everybody was. I love it here. I’m going to miss it.”

As Donna contemplates her future, she knows she “can pick and choose where I want to go.” A job in a school district sounds appealing, but she’s open to other possibilities. No matter what happens, she can look back on her college experience with pride: “I’ve done what I wanted to accomplish.”

While Donna was still at B. G. Sulzle, future classmate Deb Sieradski was working as a registered nurse, mostly in hospitals. She had been a successful nurse for over 30 years when a medical condition made it impossible for her to stand for eight hours. As she was trying to decide what to do instead, she happened to see a television commercial for Bryant & Stratton that mentioned our paralegal program. She had a cousin who was a paralegal in Boston, and he’d always said he loved his job, so she decided to consider following in his footsteps.

When she contacted our admissions department, she was pleasantly surprised to learn that there was a new diploma program, legal office assistant, which would allow her to gain a background in legal courses without committing to an associate’s degree in paralegal studies. With a teenage son to support, “I need to start work as soon as possible,” Deb says.

Once enrolled, Deb loved her courses, especially the research component. “I love doing research,” she says. “I love looking things up.”

She was especially impressed with the “excellent professors” and small class sizes that make it easy to get extra help if necessary. Favorite instructors in her legal courses included Steve Kempisty and Jordan Pavlus, but she also learned a great deal from Deb Lum’s English course. Deb also got involved outside of the classroom, by attending workshops, becoming a work-study, and joining Alpha Beta Gamma.

“I was worried that I might feel out of touch, being an older student,” Deb says, “but everyone made me feel welcome.”

Now that her diploma program is complete, Deb is looking for a job as a legal assistant, ideally in a firm that would allow her to draw upon her medical knowledge.

Deb believes that perseverance is one of the keys to her success. She advises new students: “It’s important to come every day and do the work. You’ll get a rewarding career.”

Deb Sieradski

“Classes for the Spring Semester Begin May 3”
This semester’s graduation breakfast was held on Friday, April 14. Graduates shared favorite memories and future plans with faculty and staff.

On March 30 the Alpha Beta Gamma Induction Ceremony took place on campus. Above, new inductees display candles that symbolize scholarship, leadership or cooperation. At right is new inductee and April graduate Jessica Spinali.
What Has Bryant & Stratton Meant to You?

Bryant & Stratton has brought me out of my comfort zone. I have accomplished things that I never thought I would be capable of doing. Bryant & Stratton meant more self-confidence and belief in myself. Bryant & Stratton meant new determination to succeed. The faculty at Bryant & Stratton demonstrated real support for the students' academic achievements and that meant the most to me.

-Angela Mastracchio

Bryant and Stratton to me has meant a new beginning for me and my family: new friendships, new job opportunities and a new way of living life to its fullest.

-Sue Marquart
Directions for Graduation Ceremony

Graduation rehearsal

**Date:** Friday, April 21, 2017  
**Time:** 2:30 pm  
**Place:** John H. Mulroy Civic Center  
421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse

Graduation ceremony

**Date:** Saturday, April 22, 2017  
**Time:** 11:00 A.M.  
**Place:** John H. Mulroy Civic Center  
421 Montgomery Street, Syracuse

*It is very important to arrive at the Civic Center no later than 10:30 am.* When you arrive for the ceremony, go directly to the North Campus table; there you will receive your name card as well as the card you will hand the photographer.

Those receiving an Associate degree will line up alphabetically in first and those receiving a Bachelor degree will line up alphabetically behind the Associate degree students.

Diploma pickup

Due to the timing of the graduation ceremony, students who are attending the Winter 2017 semester will be able to pick up their diplomas at the Student Services department of Bryant & Stratton North Campus beginning Monday, May 8. Students who completed their degree requirements during the Spring 2016 and Fall 2016 semesters will pick up their diplomas at the graduation ceremony.

Diplomas for BBA General Management students will be notified when their diplomas have been sent from the Southtowns Campus and are available for pickup at the North Campus. If you do not pick up your diploma at the graduation ceremony, you, the graduate, are responsible to pick up your diploma at the North Campus. We cannot mail diplomas.