

Scholarship Success Stories

Kerri Maya's Story

2010 Recipient of the AAUW Healdsburg Branch SRJC Scholarship



Having faced so many challenges as a youth including parental addiction, abuse, instability, and homelessness, Kerri opted for her GED so she could work to help support and provide care for her family. These early challenges deepened her personal resilience and empathy for others and lead her down her career path of support and caring for others.

In 2008, Kerri entered SRJC as a single mother to 4 children and caregiver for her mother with terminal lung cancer. Nonetheless, she worked and studied hard to complete her nursing degree in 2010 and graduated with the Dean's Highest Honors & membership in Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. It was at this point that our Healdsburg AAUW branch awarded Kerri a scholarship that allowed her to continue her studies and complete her BSN in Nursing at Sonoma State University. In 2012, Kerri graduated magna cum laude from SSU and was inaugurated into the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society.

Immediately after graduation, Kerri was hired as a critical care nurse in the ICU at Sutter Santa Rosa. She advanced rapidly and took on increasing leadership including specializing as an "open heart nurse" (which includes receiving patients directly from the cardiac operating room), a charge nurse, and Hospital Nursing Supervisor. Kerri received her MS in Nursing Science & Healthcare Leadership from UC Davis in 2018 and began taking second and third jobs teaching at both SSU & UC Davis.

Currently, Kerri is pursuing her PhD in Nursing at Davis while she works full-time for Sutter Health at the system-level as the Program Manager of Continuing Interprofessional Development and part-time as a Nurse Educator at UC Davis. She also frequently volunteers her time to lead ICU Surge Training (a strategy deployed during the current pandemic to increase the number of nurses with critical care skills) and training on delirium (aka Acute Brain Failure). She is a member of the Board of Directors as well as the Co-Chair of the Education Committee for the American Delirium Society and has given multiple peer-reviewed presentations on the topics at conferences across the country.

Kerri's Take-Home Message: "I am really proud of myself to start with such humble beginnings as a young, homeless mother with a GED to now being in the process of achieving my PhD and working daily as a leader and change agent within healthcare to improve severe systemic shortcomings that impact the health and well-being of us all. Yet my accomplishments thus far never would have been possible without the support of Healdsburg's AAUW branch and other caring individuals who believed in me enough to offer me the lifeline of support that I received. I have endeavored to pay-it-forward and to inspire others to rise to their potential. THANK YOU all so very much! "