

# Kelli Jo Hanken, R.N.

A post from Kelli-

As you know, I've been going to school for the past few years again for nursing. Believe it or not, it's been a really long time coming! When I was in high school, I wanted to be a nurse. I had decided that I was going to go to school for nursing in Rochester, Minnesota at a community college. I had my living arrangements figured out, financial aid done, and was getting ready to register for classes. At the same time, being a high school senior, I also decided that eventually I wanted to own a bar and grill in Jackson Junction.

On the day before prom, I came downstairs and told mom that I wasn't going to Rochester for school. I didn't know where I was going, but I just wasn't going. Needless to say she was quite surprised and told me that I wasn't going anywhere until I had the school thing figured out. I was a mess of tears-mostly cause I just wanted to stay at home-I hate change and this was a big one! I told mom I wanted to go for business so she said I better go to a 4 year school and suggested "the little college in Fayette." I hopped on the internet and looked it up, it seemed fine and I just wanted to leave the house so I told her that's where I'd go. Believe it or not, that's where I ended up.

I pretty much blew off the first year of college, drank too much, spent too much money, tried to go to class atleast half the time, and didn't make many good choices at all. Eventually I managed to half cobble my life together and was about to graduate with a double major in management and marketing in 3 1/2 years and was looking forward to moving to a big city to get a big city marketing job, but met Jason the semester before I was going to graduate. Because he was a farmer, I knew that moving to a big city was out of the question. I knew that he was "the one" pretty quickly, so I knew that I would have to put my big city dream job aside and choose something that worked with a workaholic farmer and would be conducive to having kids at some point. I ended up also pursuing a degree in Secondary Education-with endorsements in Social Sciences and Business.

Right before I was going to graduate in December, a previous teacher of mine contacted me and offered me a job working for her as a Customer Service Representative. She worked with a large Customer Relationship Management Company out of California and had a temporary opening. I knew I wasn't going to find a full time teaching job in December, so I said yes, assuming that it'd be for a few months and then I could get a teaching job for the next fall. Little did I know, that wasn't how things were going to work. The job ended up being permanent and I was thrilled. Some days were better than others (as in most customer service jobs) but I loved my bosses, the facility, and my co-workers. I really felt valued and as though I was part of a wonderful team.

Fast forward 3 more years and I found out that the company that contracted their work out was going to be pulling their contract and going to a larger global company. I was going to get laid off. We didn't know when, but it was likely going to happen. I was devastated! I had never been laid off or fired before and had always had atleast one job! Even through school, I had worked nearly 40 hours and was always able to take care of myself. After a little bit of thinking and discussing with my family, I found out about a program called the Federal Trade Act which helped individuals whose

jobs got sent overseas (mine was sent to Costa Rica) go back to school or train for another career. On a whim, I filled out the application and decided I was finally going to be a nurse. When we were approved, I was exstastic! It was finally going to happen.

I ended up getting laid off on January 10th and started on January 13th at the local community college with my Gen Eds. After a year of those, I started the nursing program. Let me tell you this about nursing school-It is hard. Really hard! It demands all of your time, energy, and everything you have. It'll chew you up and spit you out. Just when you think you've got something, you'll realize you have it all backwards. Clinicals are hard. I had to get up at 0330 in the morning to get ready, drive an hour and 15 minutes and be ready to function by 0550. Someone told me once that they had heard it was easy after the first class. I just laughed. Once you make it through the first class, you realize that you can do it and are too invested to stop, so you just keep signing yourself up for it. Strangely the person that told me that (in a not so nice tone of voice) happened to make it through the first class, but not the second.

After two years of the best kind of hard and difficult, a case of mono, lots of anxiety, some depression, lots of weeks of having next to nothing in my checking account, and thousands of miles, I did it though! I graduated on December 15th with 11 other classmates. Just before graduating, I was talking to my mother-in-law about graduation. I told her that I was more proud of my Associate's Degree of Nursing than I was any of my bachelor degrees and she was floored. Don't get me wrong, the bachelor degrees were hard, but man-My nursing degree was another level of difficult.

I was lucky enough to have some pretty wonderful people celebrate with me!

Here's me with my bestie Carver!



Doesn't Jason clean up nice? He kept giving me a hard time about going because there was a farm auction, but in true Jason fashion, he really enjoys picking on me!

His mom and dad came too!



And Kalissa of course! I really think that without her, I wouldn't have made it. She had just gone through the program a year and a half before and was a great guiding light! Side note: Isn't her hair super cute?



Carolyn came too! I'm really going to miss her a lot! I'll be stopping in to see her occasionally though-She is so much more



than just a tutor to me!

And of course, I couldn't have done it without these two! I used to work with Amanda's mom, so I knew her going into the program. We carpoled lots and she even went grocery shopping with me a time or two-but I don't think she'll ever go again! One of the sad parts of being done with nursing school is that she hasn't been able to see me all the time and I know she misses me. But I'm pretty sure I miss her more! Amanda just got a job at a local hospital not too far from here!

I took lots of my pre-reqs with this pretty lady. Her boyfriend farms too, so we often commiserated about the love/hate relationship we had with farming. Kristina just landed her dream job in pediatrics at a hospital about an hour from her house.



And then there's these two! I don't quite even know how to tell you how supportive they've been of me while I was being irresponsible and indecisive to now when I'm slightly more adult like. I think we're all pretty happy I decided to grow up!

And the best part? I just found out last Saturday that I passed boards!

So now I can officially call myself a Registered Nurse. Next week, I'll start my new part time job at a local hospital about 20 minutes away. I'm actually glad that it's part time for now so that I can still work at the nursing home. When I found out, the thing that I was most excited about was recording the temps in the fridge and freezer so that I could sign my name-KH RN.



To say I'm happy is quite an understatement!

