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103-Year-Old KCC Alumna Reminds Us It's Never Too Late to Fulfill Your Dreams

BY DR. CLAUDIA V. SCHRADER

In 1919, the year that the United States Congress approved the 19th Amendment to the constitution, which guaranteed women the right to vote, Fran Koch was born. This past month, Fran celebrated her 103rd birthday, and I had the honor to present her, our beloved Kingsborough alumna, with 470 birthday cards from the faculty and staff at Kingsborough, and the children of P.S. 206. Birthdays are usually a day when the person celebrating their birthday becomes the recipient of many gifts, but on Fran's birthday, I was reminded of the incredible gift she gives to all of us.

Fran is one of the thousands of alumni who have entered the gates of KCC as an adult. She was 54 years of age. Fran had always wanted to earn a college degree. Her affinity for sports and athletic prowess in both baseball and handball spurred her desire to become a physical education teacher. However, in those days, she said that children were encouraged to go to

work after high school, so that is what she did after graduating from James Madison High School.

In the years that ensued, she absorbed all the joy that came from working and her family, but her desire to go to college never waned. When she mentioned to her husband that she wanted to go to college, he was in full support. In 1975, she walked into the gates of Kingsborough and two years later graduated with a 4.0 GPA. Many years later, a chance encounter with Marilyn Chernin, former Dean of Student Life and Special Functions at KCC resulted in Fran becoming a founding member of KCC MY TURN, a program designed for adults 60 and over to attend college tuition-free. The program has held a special place for Fran; not only was she again back in the classroom, but she made a new host of life-long friends.

Fran shared with me that she developed an acronym for MY TURN, which is Make Your Time Useful Right Now. As fate would



Kingsborough Community College President Claudia Schrader presents Fran Koch, a KCC Alumna, with 470 birthday cards from the faculty and staff at Kingsborough and the children of P.S. 206.

have it, this would be my gift from Fran, this acronym that reminds us about the potential and power of time. Entering college as an adult, she reminds us that our dreams are worthy of fulfillment.

Unlike 41 years ago, when Fran started at KCC, there are far more options for how one might pursue a college degree. Today, you can choose from taking classes online, in person, or a combination of both. Some degree programs also offer credit in exchange for life experience in a particular field of employment. There are also a myriad of support services and resources available: from childcare and counseling to the Men's Resource Center, the Women's Center, and the Safe Zone program for LBGTQIA students. There are also programs designed to help you finish your college degree, like Kingsborough's KCC Flex Program, an affordable and flexible way to earn or finish a college degree; the Accelerated Studies in Associate Program (ASAP) designed to help associate degree seeking students earn their degrees as quickly as possible; and the College Discovery Program which helps students who may not have been able to attend college due to educational or

financial challenges earn their college degrees.

It is May, and we are in the midst of Commencement Season. It's the season when students are graduating from school or college, so we often think of it as a time when students have reached the end of a journey, but it also symbolizes the beginning (or commencement) of a new chapter. Fran started a new chapter at age 54. She shows us that it is never too late. If you've always wanted to go to college, if you have some college and no degree, then there is a place for you at Kingsborough, and the time is now.

Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College, a 72-acre academic oasis located in beautiful Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn that offers students affordable two-year degrees for their future. For more information about the College's degree programs visit www.kingsborough.edu.