Carrie Bergquist graduated in 2011 with her bachelor's degree. For Carrie Bergquist the decision to go back to school was more than preparation for the next step in a career. It was about her two daughters, a better life, and seizing an opportunity. A faculty member in the Business Department at the University of Minnesota Crookston was the meeting that sparked the idea for Bergquist.

For the past 10 years, the 2011 graduate has been with Altru Health System working her way from medical records to the transcription department to insurance to her current role in administration and retention as well as serving as a regional health care preparedness coordinator. Bergquist works closely with the marketing department at Altru, sets up shadowing with physicians, onboards new staff and immerses herself and others at Altru in community engagement activities.

Following her meeting with her former faculty member Kenneth Johnson in Business Department at UMN Crookston, Bergquist found the inspiration and the push she needed. Along with her obligation, she found the right combination of online and on-campus classes to make it work.

Balancing a career and motherhood, with school was not always easy and required balancing time after work between her children and her homework. "I would focus on my children’s homework and give them my time when I came home in the evening and study as soon as they were tucked in," Bergquist says. "I was fortunate to have the support of Altru. Workplace support for education was vital and helped me continue to support my family while working toward my degree."

She found the leadership, psychology and management classes in her business management major to be invaluable. "I came away with a better understanding of my employees and how I could help them work to their best potential," Bergquist continues.

"In marketing I learned to pay attention to how businesses are set up and how they could be changed to better serve their customers," Bergquist added. "And in accounting, I learned to pay attention to the numbers because that is how we make decisions."

When Bergquist graduated in 2011, she and her girls went to Disney to celebrate, a plan they hatched together two years before she finished. "You make a decision, you push through, and you always keep the end in sight." Bergquist says.

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Bergquist enjoyed her online classes as much as her on-campus ones. "We learn a lot from each other," she explains. "Through group chats we would solve problems together no matter where we were located across the country and we each brought something different to the conversations."

If she had a favorite class, one of the top contenders certainly would be instructor Chuck Lakretz’s entrepreneurship class. Going back to school was not exactly what she expected for Bergquist, but she knew it was one of the best decisions she has made for herself and her fellow classmates. "I have my diploma on display in my office," she says. "It reminds me of those years and what they meant to our future as a family."

It goes without saying, there were times when she wanted to throw in the towel, but it seemed someone or something always seemed to be there to keep her going including important encouragement from her advisor. bergquist works closely with the marketing department at Altru, sets up shadowing with physicians, onboards new staff and immerses herself and others at Altru in community engagement activities.

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By Elizabeth Tollefson on Monday, September 16, 2019

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In photos:

Bergquist graduated in 2011 with her bachelor's degree.

Hyla Bontjes Keesland and Jack with their mom, Carrie who currently works at Altru Health System in Crookston.