



Alumni Connection

Making A Difference

Early in her childhood, Elsie "Jo" Clardy Hammons of Center Point recognized her desire to become a nurse.

"It was my dream," said Hammons. "Since I was a small child, I knew that's what I wanted to do."

At times, Hammons' dream seemed unattainable. Born in 1933, Hammons married at 14 years of age. She had her first child at age 17 in 1951 and her second at age 29 in 1963. As time permitted, she studied for the high school equivalency exam and passed it in the summer of 1965.

When Jefferson State opened its doors for the first time in the fall of 1965, Hammons enrolled and was one of the first students attending classes at the college.

"Jefferson State was so accessible to me," said Hammons. "I would have never had the opportunity to attend college if Jefferson State wasn't located so close to my community."

She took one class during that first fall, but as soon as her youngest child could attend kindergarten, she began taking more. She excelled in her classes and, in 1970, graduated with a degree in nursing.

Just after graduation, Hammons was hired by Medical Center East and worked as a nurse there until her retirement six years ago.

"I'm very thankful for Jefferson State," said Hammons. "It gave me the opportunity for a nice career and helped me accomplish my dream."