51-year-old Student Teacher

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VFTH

WKU’s School of Teacher Education has one of its largest groups of student teachers in the classroom this semester – 195 total.

One of them is over fifty and about to finish a degree she started in 1986. Amy Bingham talks to her in this week’s View from the Hill.

Karen Russell grew up in Meade County wanting to be an attorney and never even planned to marry or have children. None of that happened. And now, after a lot of hard work, she’s about to realize her dream of becoming a teacher.

“I mean I hate to brag but I’m proud of myself because I’m 51 and I finally finished what I started at 18.”

As a reminder of this long journey, Karen Russell carries around her first student ID from U of L from the fall of 1986.

“I didn’t really want to go to school. My mom and dad said try for a semester and if you don’t like it – well I didn’t like it, I wanted money so I quit. “

After starting school and stopping a few more times…..

“You know there’s been children there’s been divorces there’s been a remarriage, there’s just been so many things happen.”

….Russell finally got connected to WKU’s School of Teacher Education and is now just months away from receiving her diploma.

“There’s been times that my husband’s come home and I’m sitting on the couch with tv trays and homework, laptop and I’m in tears, I’m too old for this, I can’t do this.”

“I have a 15 year old at home and I have a five year old granddaughter in kindergarten and I’m still taking classes and I’m student teaching. My house is like chaos.”

Now student teaching at David T. Wilson Elementary in her hometown, Russell calls school her happy place and thinks of her age as an advantage.

“I find myself more patient, definitely more disciplined in assignments and I don’t know that the younger me would have been.”

She’s well aware many teachers her age have already retired.

“It’s very possible I could be replacing someone that I went to school with.”

But she has her sights set on a long career.

“I don’t want to teach any less than 20 years, I feel healthy, I feel energetic, I feel good.”

And if there’s one thing she would like to share with others?

I would definitely tell anyone you’re never too old to go back to school.”

Russell is excited to begin looking for a job after her graduation on May 16th. She says she could have never reached this goal without the support of her family.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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