

A LONG AND REWARDING PATH

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Shiri Spear is living proof that a Rivier education can transform more than just your heart and mind, but your whole life.



Shiri Spear, Class of 2005 Secondary Mathematics Education, *FOX25 Morning News Meteorologist*

You might recognize this television personality—the morning meteorologist for FOX25 News, on air from 4 to 10 a.m. weekdays. What you may not know, however, is the long and at times trying path that she traveled to get to where she is today.

Spear graduated from Rivier in 2005 with a degree in secondary mathematics education. At the time, her husband and high school sweetheart Matt—whom she married at age 19—had been sent on a series of deployments with the Marines to Iraq and Afghanistan. After transferring from a Canadian university, where she studied atmospheric and oceanic sciences, to a college in North Carolina, Spear decided to come home to southern New Hampshire to finish her undergraduate education. Rivier was the first school that came to mind, and the only one she applied to.

“My mother graduated from Riv and I always had a great impression of the education and support she received,” says Spear. “I needed a good support system while my husband was overseas, and found it in Rivier’s faculty and staff.”

Attending the same school that she grew up watching her mother attend rooted a desire to learn in Spear at a young age—part of her passion for learning, she says, came from her mother, whose passion came from Rivier.

Spear taught preschool full-time while earning her degree from Rivier. When she transferred, she had so many math and science credits that she felt education was a natural choice. She also recalled fondly her high school math and science teachers, who she says were responsible for sparking a love of learning in her, and she wanted to do the same for future generations.

She says she attended Rivier during a time when her personal life was in disarray, but was able to find comfort in the bonds she formed with faculty and fellow students. Despite balancing a full-time job with completing her education, which made it more difficult to get involved in campus life, Rivier made her feel like part of a community again. “I always felt like I belonged to a family at Rivier,” she says. “I felt like part of the Rivier family before I stepped foot into my first class.”

Spear’s undergraduate experience was a nontraditional one—because she was married and working full-time, she wasn’t able to participate in extracurricular activities, clubs or athletic teams the way many other students did. Although she would have loved to be more involved, many of her classes were scheduled in the evening so that she could put in a full day of work first. But that didn’t stop her from being transformed by her Rivier experience.

“Rivier’s mission to ‘transform hearts and minds to serve the world’ can take on different meanings for different people,” she says. “Personally, I attended Rivier when I was struggling with my husband’s deployment. I was challenged in the required religion course to consider ideas I had never encountered or contemplated, and it turned out to be the most wonderful lesson on believing in myself and finding comfort in aspects of all different faiths and religions. Somewhere along the line, I collected a series of ideas that I had faith in that helped me find peace in my own life, which in turn helped me cope with what I was going through.”

Although she graduated from Rivier ready to conquer the job market, Spear decided to instead pursue higher education, earning a master’s in environmental and atmospheric sciences. She was certified to teach in New Hampshire, but she ultimately felt that she needed to fulfill her interest in weather.

After completing graduate school, Spear landed her first on-air position at WWLP in Springfield, Mass., where she served as the weekend morning meteorologist and environmental reporter from 2007 to 2010. She then worked as a meteorologist in Miami/Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., until she got the opportunity to come home to Boston in November 2012—where she plans to stay for good. She enjoys the fact that there is always room to learn and grow in her field, especially as technology continues to evolve, and says that it is “humbling and an honor” to deliver the daily forecast, especially being in the position to provide potentially lifesaving information in severe weather situations.

Being a part of FOX25 is “pretty unbelievable,” Spear says—growing up in southern New Hampshire, she watched the Boston stations every day with her father, who commuted into the city daily for work.

“I’m proud of myself for continuing to travel the path ahead of me,” she says. “I learned so much about being an adult, a wife and a professional at Rivier through taking my nontraditional path. I wouldn’t change a thing about it.”

Now a parent herself, Spear is thankful to have a job and schedule that allows her to not only do what she loves every day, but spend valued time with her family in the evenings—and hopes to become a trusted source for weather information as her career in Boston continues to grow.

She credits Rivier with helping her to build a solid foundation for her eventual career path and her entire life—teaching her valuable lessons beyond the skills and knowledge she acquired in the classroom and providing her with a well-rounded education that helped her to grow through study, discussion and real-world experiences.

“Rivier is a community-oriented environment where you can find welcoming people of all interests and walks of life,” Spear says. “The faculty and staff encourage learning through study and real-life experience. Along the way, expect to learn not just about your major or trade, but about yourself.” ■



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