



No portion of this article may be reproduced without  
express written permission of Style Publishing Group, LLC.  
©2007 • All rights reserved.



Style Publishing Group  
P.O. Box 1676  
Frisco, Texas 75034  
Phone: 972.335.1181  
Toll Free: 877.781.7067  
Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: [info@friscostyle.com](mailto:info@friscostyle.com)  
Web: [www.friscostyle.com](http://www.friscostyle.com)

**Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306**



Indira Crisman-Fewell

photo provided by Collin County Community College

## Plain & Fancy: Scholarships Provided through Fundraising

By Shawn Stewart

IT'S NOT EVERY DAY you meet someone who can play classical music and goes "mudding" on the weekends. Indira Crisman-Fewell can do just that--she can play Beethoven's "Für Elyse" on a baby grand piano and drive a four-wheeling, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) through the Kiamichi Mountains of southeastern Oklahoma just for fun. This poised Frisco native with runway-model looks is quiet and unassuming... yet she drives an ATV?

"Nobody suspects that," she says with a wink, "until they go riding with me."

Ms. Crisman-Fewell is a sophomore at Collin County Community College District (Collin) double majoring in psychology and real estate. Next year, she will graduate with two Associate of Arts degrees. At age 36, she's finally getting the college education she always wanted.

Some older students feel awkward

about returning to school and squeezing into desks alongside younger students, but that was not the case for Ms. Crisman-Fewell.

"I have a strong desire for learning," she said, "and I knew that going back to school would satisfy my hunger for higher education."

Since enrolling at Collin, she has become a member and officer of two college honor societies, Psi Beta and Phi Theta Kappa. She was named to the National Dean's List for maintaining a 3.5 grade-point average, she donates her time mentoring young children and she has volunteered in a shelter for battered women. Last fall, in recognition of her hard work and dedication, she received the Larry Stern Faculty Scholarship from the CCCCD Foundation, Inc., the Collin's fund-raising arm.

Ms. Crisman-Fewell achieved all these

successes despite some major hurdles in her life.

One creative activity designed to support the success of students is Collin's annual Plain & Fancy Ball, which raises scholarship money.

"There was a time when I did not know where my next meal was coming from," she said. "I felt very excited to be selected as a scholarship recipient and relieved of that financial burden. It lightened the load on my financial situation greatly."

Ms. Chrisman-Fewell used the money for tuition and books. But equally important to her success was the personal attention from her professors. She has many favorite instructors, so it is hard to name just one. But if anyone stands out in her mind, it would have to be sociology professor Larry Stern, since the scholarship she received was given in his name.

"I took Professor Stern's Introduction to Sociology class in the summertime. I was often in the hallway studying before class and he took the time to talk to me and to get to know me personally. As a sociology professor, he really understands people and their problems. He helped me get through a difficult time in my life. I'll always remember that," stated Ms. Chrisman-Fewell.

For a woman who has lived in New York City, who plays the classical piano and who recently remarried, she still lists "my accomplishments at Collin" as one of her proudest achievements. "Here at Collin, we have an exceptional president, Cary Israel, who genuinely cares about and actively implements improvements and activities that support the success of the students," said Ms. Chrisman-Fewell.

The number of Collin students receiving financial aid and scholarships is about 7,000 per year.

One creative activity designed to support the success of students is Collin's annual Plain and Fancy Ball, which raises scholarship money for students like Ms. Chrisman-Fewell.

The Plain and Fancy Ball takes place this year on March 4 at the Spring Creek Campus Conference Center, 2800 E. Spring Creek Parkway in Plano. In only its second year, this fundraiser succeeds in attracting many participants due to its eclectic attitude. Following last year's dress code, those attending are encouraged to mix-and-match fancy party attire, like a tuxedo or evening gown, with plain attire, like a pair of old boots or a baseball cap. With the theme this year having a Texas



flavor, look for cowboy hats and boots with tuxes or sequined tops paired with jeans and boots. Attendees will enjoy the two-step, tango and waltz dancing lessons, local cuisine, Texas hold-'em poker, a live jazz band, food, games and more.

For students who receive Collin scholarships, the purpose of the event is much more than just fun and games.

According to President Cary Israel, "Collin is the only public college in Collin County and the fastest growing of all colleges and universities in Texas. Even though we distributed nearly \$13 million in financial aid and scholarships, more than 2,000 requests have been denied. Clearly, the demand for financial assistance continues to surpass our ability to meet it and our students desperately need scholarships."

The number of Collin students receiving financial aid and scholarships is about 7,000 per year. In 2005, 8,666 students indicated they would like student employment, but federal funding restraints only allowed 50 to participate in the federal work student program.

About 80 percent of Collin students are working 20-40 hours a week, which does not include family and academic responsibilities.

Ms. Chrisman-Fewell can relate to those challenges.

"It's hard for some people to go to school, because of finances," she said. "People are having to work two and three jobs just to get by. Sometimes students are struggling in class because they work so much."

In its first year as the foundation's major fundraiser, the Plain and Fancy Ball, raised more than \$150,000 for scholarships. A \$1,000 scholarship pays for tuition and books for one student for one semester. A \$5,000 scholarship can purchase tuition and books for a student to earn a two-year Associate's degree. Sponsorship levels for the Plain and Fancy Ball vary from \$1,000 - \$20,000.

"College opens a world of great opportunities, but too many talented people are sitting out because they cannot afford it," said Sam Roach, chairman of the Collin Board of Trustees. "Scholarship donations have a direct payback locally because they put higher education within reach for students who will become the nurses, teachers, firefighters and EMTs we need."

---

*Shawn Stewart is a writer in public relations at Collin County Community College.*