

Spotlight on Success ... Profiling a Graphic Arts Graduate

ERIN HYNEK

If ever there was a success story that came directly from mentoring, it is found in Erin Hynek. Erin, a print buyer for UPS, is a 1989 graduate of Marietta High School's PrintEd-accredited graphic arts program as well as a 1993 graduate of Georgia Southern University's printing program. Erin credits Steve Spofford (then the graphic arts instructor for Marietta) as the reason she even considered graphic arts as a career.

In actuality, it was her brother and her friends who first peaked her interest in taking Spofford's (known as Spoff to most everyone) graphic arts class. "It seemed like everyone I knew took this elective class, and there was a waiting list 'a mile long.' I knew it had to be fun if there were that many kids signing up for it." After a few months, the class became much more than an elective to Erin.

Erin joined Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA) and the student chapter of PIAG. There were activities after school and on the weekends — and she didn't miss an opportunity to take advantage of all the program had to offer.

Ever since she was a child, Erin had dreamed of becoming a lawyer. Then during her junior year, Spoff asked if she was interested in attending a weeklong seminar at Georgia Southern for printing students.

Having never been away from her home in Marietta, Erin was more than a little nervous about

being gone "that far" (really only three hours!) for a week. During the week, Georgia Southern taught the high school juniors how to shoot and develop black-and-white film, print notepads, and design and print t-shirts. "It was the most amazing week. Not only did we learn a lot, we had a wonderful time.

That week I decided ... this is what I want to do, and that is where I'm going to college!"

"Erin was one of my best," said Spoff. "She has been a jewel of our program. Erin turned onto printing and stayed focused — I simply couldn't give her work fast enough. She is most definitely a success story."

When Erin left for GSU, she was terribly homesick and cried to go back home. Then in her second semester, Scott Williams asked her to be the lab assistant for the printing program. She ended up assisting him through graduation. "It was almost as if Spoff had passed me onto him and told him to look out for me," Erin said. She became a student assistant in the summer seminar that had convinced her to attend GSU and completed an internship at IPD during the summer between her sophomore and junior years. "At graduation, I was crying because I was leaving and I really felt a part of something."

"The great thing about my printing degree was that I knew I'd have a spot when I graduated. I looked at the business majors and knew they'd

be delivering pizzas the next year."

Just before graduation, Erin was approached by several Atlanta area print shops. Erin decided to work for Graphcom as a customer service representative. "Graphcom spoiled me. It was such a family atmosphere and I felt like I could say what I felt and not be chastised for it. My opinion mattered there. I don't think I could ever work for another printing company, because I feel such loyalty to my family at Graphcom." Erin eventually became responsible for purchasing and scheduling. When she left Graphcom two years ago, it was only because she was ready for a new challenge.

A former GSU classmate had an opening in the print buying department at UPS. Erin interviewed and won the position. Now she is the print production supervisor at the global company — the only full-time print buyer at UPS. She also supervises a staff of contract print buyers who work for UPS on a freelance basis. Erin loves having the freedom to buy top-of-the-line work. "Pressmen always love our jobs; there's never a complaint about the stock not matching the quality we're looking for. UPS wants the best."

Erin spoke to would-be printers at Sunbelt 2000?. When asked how to motivate these high school students to choose printing as a career, Erin humbly replied, "Not by someone like me telling them 'I love printing.' You have to start them out with a mentor that really cares about them and has that 'set the world on fire' spirit — someone like Spoff who can get them really excited about printing."

