

Rachelle Erickson selected Metropolitan State University outstanding student

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When Rachelle Erickson legally emancipated from her mother as an 11th grader, one might suspect challenging times ahead, yet the Stillwater resident has not only survived – she thrived.

True, Erickson endured trying circumstances – she occasionally worked three jobs simultaneously – but thanks to fierce determination and commitment, Erickson earned a college degree. And on Apr. 29 she took the next step, attaining her graduate degree from Metropolitan State University's School of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (SLC). Moreover, Erickson was selected SLC spring semester outstanding graduate student.

"It's a huge deal," to receive her graduate degree, said Erickson, now 26. "My experience made me stronger and more determined. It made me realize if you want anything, you have to do it on your own."

Commended for her talent, professionalism, inherent curiosity, conscientiousness and excellent writing skills, Erickson maintained a 4.0 GPA.

The Vietnamese-American is a full-time corrections officer at Minnesota Correctional Facility-Oak Park Heights and a part-time officer at the Ramsey County Jail. Erickson also serves as a reserve officer for the Stillwater Police Department. She previously worked at the Lino Lakes and Stillwater correctional facilities.

Emancipating from one or both parents is rare but Erickson was granted the status of adulthood at age 17 because she demonstrated the ability to financially support herself.

Erickson won several scholarships while attending the University of Minnesota-Duluth (UMD), where she received a psychology degree at age 20 and graduated magna cum laude in 2007.

While attending UMD and Metropolitan State, Erickson was active in community service. She volunteered at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Roseville, participated in Minnesota's Walk for MS and contributed to a memorial dinner that paid tribute to fallen U.S. Marines.

Future plans for Erickson include completing an accelerated law enforcement certificate

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program at Metropolitan State and then passing a test to serve as a licensed peace officer in Minnesota. Eventually, she hopes to work on domestic violence and child-abuse neglect cases.