

A Bit of Me

This series of profiles on SUNY Broome community members is a part of the Student Village diversity calendar initiative. We will be highlighting members in our community who identify with or can speak on the diversity theme or topic for each month. The theme for March is Women's History month and the topic is women in the workforce. To be featured in this series please reach out to Pamela Alvarez or Alexandria Donkor.

Sandy Stephens

Secretary to Associate Vice President and Dean of Students



Background: Sandy Stephens is the current secretary to the Associate Vice President and Dean of Students.

WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PROFESSION?

I have two Associates Degrees from SUNY Broome, both in Independent Studies. One is an AAS, and the other an AS. I am currently attending Excelsior College to get my Bachelors in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Psychology and secondary in Business.

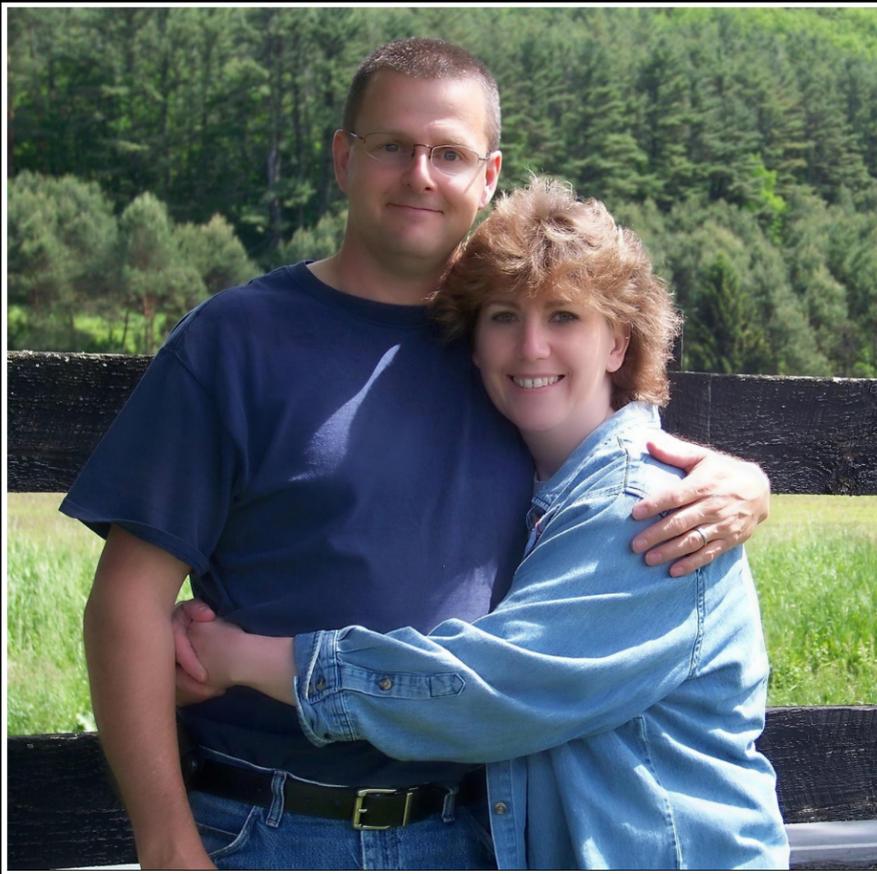
I chose to be a secretary because I love working in an office! Office supplies and technologies have always been my happy place. The position of secretary is naturally a helper position, too, which I think suits my personality. I enjoy helping people and learning new things, so this position fits in well. It also allows me some leadership opportunities, as well, as I am able to guide students and encourage them in their educational goals. It's rewarding to see how a friendly face or listening ear can make the difference in someone's day. The campus community depends on me for support, answers, and diligence and I pride myself on providing that to them.



WHO IS AN IMPORTANT WOMAN TO YOU? IN YOUR LIFE, IN HISTORY, OR IN MEDIA?

Wow, this is actually a hard question for me, as there are so many women I admire, both throughout history and in my own life. I suppose first and foremost it would be my maternal grandmother, as she taught me so much about the importance of family and how to give to others unselfishly. Many of my role models in history include female authors such as Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott, who had to overcome the stigma of

the female role and embraced feminism in a way that showed not only that they were independent, but also that they had a sharp and politically active mind. Other women also showed determination as they overcame personal obstacles, including Eleanor Roosevelt and Jackie Kennedy. Of course, there was the bravery of women who put their lives on the line as well, like Harriet Tubman, Joan of Arc, and Clara Barton. Women have had to prove themselves able so much throughout history and are still fighting for equality today.



WHAT IS ONE THING THAT WOMEN HAVE TODAY THAT YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR?

The right to vote and own property. It still amazes me that there was a time in history - not too long ago! - when women had no say in affairs that directly affected them. The voices of those who literally stood next to men and put their lives on the line will never be heard, as they have passed before they were allowed to make important choices. Thankfully they have paved the way to allow women today to have a voice, get an education, and show that they have value outside of their more "traditional" roles. Not only that, but the fact that women previously couldn't even own the property that they called their home is just astounding.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WISH WOMEN COULD HAVE SOMEDAY?

True equality. While we have come a long way in the fight for equality, there is still a long way to go. Women are still fighting for equal pay, equal consideration, and an equal voice at the table. Much remains to be done before we can look at one another and consider the value in others as individuals and humans rather than seeing things like the color of their skin, their cultural identity, their gender, their gender identity, their disability, the list goes on.

IS THERE A WOMAN WHO INSPIRES YOU IN YOUR CHOSEN CAREER/FIELD?

Since I'm still trying to figure out what I'm going to be when I grow up, I wouldn't say in my career or field specifically. But I can say that Michelle Obama is someone that I greatly admire for her ability to be professional while still being down to earth and humble. She has a way about her that draws people in and makes them want to be a part of what she is doing, and I hope to reflect that in my own work, wherever I am. I appreciate her ability to be thrifty and not put on airs, but still show professionalism, intelligence, and compassion.

WHAT IS ONE AREA OF LIFE WHERE YOU BELIEVE THAT WOMEN STILL HAVE TO FIGHT TO BE TREATED FAIRLY?

While the business world was my first thought, I believe the home is still a battlefield for most women. It is difficult for many to break free of those gender roles in the home where women are still the main caretakers for the children, are still responsible for household chores, yet are working a full-time job - the same as their male counterparts. I'm not saying that there isn't a shift in that mindset happening, and there are some households that are able to share the load, but for many women, the domestic role still falls on their shoulders. It's time for everyone to share the load and work together to get things done.

WHICH DISNEY PRINCESS OR NON-DISNEY PRINCESS DO YOU IDENTIFY WITH?

Definitely Belle from Beauty and the Beast. First off - the library she gets! I love to read and can't even imagine having personal access to that many books! Secondly, she breaks the mold when it comes to the traditional roles that were expected of her. She didn't want to marry someone just because it was expected, she held education in high regard, and she can see the beauty in things that other people can't. She is kind, strong, and has a curious mind!

IS THERE ANY WOMEN (VILLAIN OR HERO) YOU DISLIKE IN A MOVIE/SITCOM/SHOW/VIDEO GAME?

Professor Umbridge from Harry Potter. There's just something about that character that makes me irrationally angry. I think it's the front she puts forth of being super sweet, yet in reality she is purely evil. And being that mean to children, I mean really? Does she

kick puppies, too? I was exceptionally happy when the centaurs dragged her into the forest.

IS THERE A FEMALE VILLAIN YOU LIKE OR IDENTIFY WITH?

That's an interesting question, and I would have to say Maleficent. I didn't really identify with any female villains until watching that movie. It made me realize that she was really forced into a bad place by society labeling her as an outcast and as being different. It really makes you realize how our actions can have an affect on someone and create a persona. Don't get me wrong, I don't think turning evil is ever the answer. But we have to consider as a society if the way we treat others or label others is going to affect them in a way that forces them down a negative path. I've been that person on the outside looking in, and it's not a pleasant place to reside. A little respect for another person can go a long way toward having a positive influence in their life. You never know, it might be the one thing that they hold on to as they struggle with everything else!

HAS A PARTICULAR WOMAN INSPIRED YOU IN YOUR CURRENT TASTE OR AESTHETIC? IF SO WHO?

I would have to say no. I've never been one to fall into the fashionable trends or popular decorum. I have always just been who I am and what you see is what you get. Peer pressure was never a thing for me, as I always felt that we should think for ourselves. I think we have to be careful not to fall into the trap of following trends, as we are all unique and that uniqueness should be able to shine through. When you start trying to be someone else, you lose more of yourself. Be inspired by someone, learn from them, don't try to be them. Be you!

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE FICTIONAL WOMAN AND WHY?

One of my favorite fictional women is Eowyn from the Lord of the Rings trilogy. She was the daughter of kings and was told to mind her place and stay behind. Instead, she grabbed her sword and fought to defend her kingdom. One of my favorite quotes in the book is when she goes up against the Witch-King who essentially tells her that no living man can kill him. Her response is to pull off her helmet and tell him that she is no man - then of course she proceeds to do him in. She knows that she needs to lead and protect her

people, and she can't do that by sitting back and letting the men do all the work. It takes all of them working together, utilizing their strengths, and banding together to ensure the safety of Middle Earth. She's a strong leader who is willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of others, lead those who need to be led, and has great compassion for her fellow man - and woman.