Kayde Lininger says the first person she met upon arriving at Rogue Community College was Jil Rigby, a longtime staff member in the Learning Center on the Redwood Campus.

“Jil saw the apprehension in my face when I walked in the door of K Building. She’s a very calm, caring person. You can see compassion in her smiling face,” Lininger recalled. Had the initial encounter been less welcoming, Lininger, who wanted to earn a GED, likely would have bolted.

“I’m 99.9 percent sure I wouldn’t have come back, said Lininger, 31. “It’s a very hard thing to do, and the older you get, the harder it is.”

Adding to her difficulty was long-held shame at not having a high school diploma. “It was my deep, dark secret. Even my closest friends didn’t know.”

Rigby, who was a secretary at the time, is now a data management specialist but still works with Adult Basic Skills students. She understood how sensitive the situation was for Lininger and helped get her registered for the GED program.

This winter Lininger completed the GED exams, finishing in the top 1.5 percentile nationwide. She’s now enrolled in RCC credit classes, earning As, and will be a student speaker at GED graduation June 11. The entire Adult Basic Skills staff in K Building was skillful and supportive, Lininger said, and she now loves school.

Lininger spent part of her high school years in Grants Pass where she always felt at home. But during her senior high school year in southern California, she dropped out, started working in sales, got married and had two kids.

She moved back to Grants Pass in 2006. When the business she worked for closed in 2010, she interviewed for another job but sensed it hadn’t gone well. Driving home she passed by the college.

“I had always wanted to go back to school. I heard God’s voice telling me to go in. I almost didn’t listen, but I’m glad I did,” she said. While taking the series of GED exams, Lininger’s father and then her grandmother died. “The staff bent over backwards to make sure I got the tests done and was able
to attend their funerals.”

Lininger received a Ford Foundation Restart Scholarship that pays for 90 percent of college costs through a bachelor’s degree and 80 percent of a master’s. Her career goal is to become a nurse practitioner.

“I love to help people,” she said “Emergency medical care is challenging and always evolving.” She’s also proud of being a role model for sons Braden, 6, and Preston, 10.

“Seeing me study and get As has challenged and inspired them,” Lininger explained. “And I’m showing them you’re never too old to fulfill your dreams. A year ago I wouldn’t have dreamed of accomplishing this,” she continued. “Having positive energy goes a long way. Life, these days, is wonderful.”

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