

County seniors look forward to graduation but are preparing for next step

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?



Center Grove senior Kelly Pritchett will attend the University of Southern Indiana in the fall to pursue a nursing degree.

Career path shaped road to college

Her college search revolved around two priorities.

Kelly Pritchett wanted a guarantee that she would get into a nursing program before she even started classes. And she wanted a campus that made her feel at home and comfortable.

Going to college was never up for debate for the Center Grove senior. Pritchett's family members have degrees, and they drilled into her head the importance of getting more education and finding a satisfying career.

She wasn't worried about how she would pay for it. The only question was where she would go.

Pritchett has settled on the University of Southern Indiana. With the help of her parents and the school's relatively low in-state tuition, she'll work toward her goal of becoming a nurse.

The 18-year-old had not heard of the university before she saw a flier at school. She was struck by the vivid pictures of the campus and the phrase at the top, "Southern hospitality."



From left: Center Grove seniors Erica Milam, Brad Robley and Katie Brown will graduate soon. Milam plans to attend Ivy Tech to pursue a nursing degree, Robley will attend Capital University in Ohio to major in criminal justice, and Brown will attend Purdue to study pharmacology.

Economy dictates plans

Center Grove senior Erica Milam was determined to become a nurse without going into debt.

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Milam's parents continually preached the benefits of never owing money to anyone. They taught her to pay cash, save her money and buy only what she could afford.

The 19-year-old decided that the same philosophy goes for college.

Why go into debt when she can go to a less expensive school, get an associate degree and start working while she completes a bachelor's degree?

Milam will skip the traditional route of going to a four-year school, living on campus and borrowing money. She plans to get an associate degree from Ivy Tech Community College and split the cost with her parents.

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Central Nine changing image

A new college preparation specialist helps Central Nine Career Center students find information about colleges and visit campuses.

Students and parents filled out federal financial aid forms at the career center's 12-hour fair to help students get help paying for college.

And seniors got a checklist in the fall telling them what they needed to do each

month to be ready for college the following year.

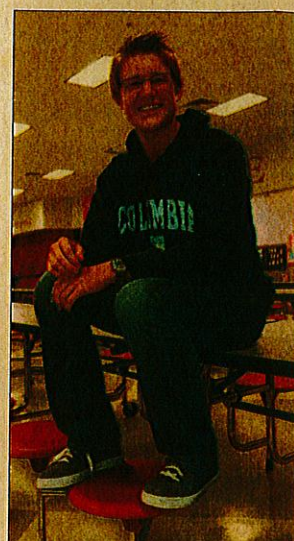
Central Nine students traditionally went straight from high school to jobs building houses, repairing cars or welding. Though many students still follow that path, director Stephen Hagen is pushing for more students to go on to college.

(SEE IMAGE, PAGE A6)

BY THE NUMBERS

Plans of graduating seniors from Johnson County:

School, graduating class	Total grads	Four-year college or university	Two-year college	Vocational or technical school	Military	Other	Percentage getting post-high school education
Center Grove Class of 2010	512	329	102	11	17	53	86%
Center Grove Class of 2009	523	337	44	2	8	132	73%
Center Grove Class of 2008	501	363	24	71	6	37	91%
Franklin Class of 2010	335	177	64	40	13	40	84%
Whiteland Class of 2010	345	138	107	14	21	66	75%
Whiteland Class of 2009	343	161	93	21	17	51	80%
Whiteland							



Center Grove senior Ethan Raker will attend Columbia University in the fall. Raker has yet to decide on a focus of study.

Education, new scenery top wish list

He didn't know what he wanted to study or where he wanted to go.

Ethan Raker only knew he wanted a good education and wanted to live in a city outside Indiana.

The Center Grove senior has lived in Johnson County for most of his life, and he's ready for a change of scenery.

This fall, Raker will join the freshman class at Columbia University in New York. He will live in the middle of Manhattan and spend his first year at the Ivy League school deciding what he wants to study.

Raker, 18, decided not to let money keep him from going to the best college possible. With tuition and fees, a year at Columbia could cost more than \$50,000. But whatever the cost, he decided he would find a way to make it work.

His parents will help him pay tuition, and he earned scholarships that will cover much of the cost.

"I didn't want to put a price on an education, especially a

● Image

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

This school year, Central Nine hired a college specialist, conducted its first financial aid event and is giving students as much information about college as possible.

Hagen wants the efforts to change Central Nine's image from a school for students who don't go to college into a program that's right for college-bound students, too. The change in image also could attract more advanced high school students, he said.

He emphasizes college because training after high school is essential in getting a better job, he said. He wants more students to go to a university, community college, technical school or military training program to earn degrees or certifications that they can't get in high school.

"We're trying to make sure

Johnson County students understand that their opportunities are a lot more rich once they've obtained those credentials," Hagen said.

Central Nine students have an advantage when they go to college because they already have experimented with their chosen career path, he said. Other students often don't find out a career isn't right for them until a few years into college or even after they graduate.

A recent study by IUPUI showed that 95 percent of Central Nine students stay in the Johnson County community and work for local companies, Hagen said.

"If they're going to stay here, we're trying to help them be skilled and marketable," he said.

For many years, about 10 to 15 percent of Central Nine students went on to two-year or four-year colleges. For the past 10 years, though, more than half the graduates have.

But the state wants Central Nine to send even more students to col-

lege. A federal grant gave the career center the money to hire an employee specifically to help students get ready for training beyond high school.

Dedra Dyer, the college and career preparation specialist, spends her days meeting with students. She helps them get information about colleges, technical schools or the military, and she takes groups of students to visit area colleges.

She said she tells students that if they don't choose post-high school training or the military, they need to be prepared to enter the work force and start their careers.

"Being a bum is not an option," she said.

Many of the students will be the first in their families to go to college, she said. Their parents have never gone through the application process, don't know how to apply for financial aid and aren't sure how much tuition costs.

She tries to give them needed

information and guide them through the financial aid process. More than 200 parents and students filled out the federal form during Central Nine's financial aid day in February.

Dyer also encourages students to sign up for dual-credit courses, in which they can earn high school and college credits at the same time. When students already have college credits under their belt, they're more likely to continue at a community college or four-year school, she said.

Hagen does not know how many of the school's 650 seniors plan to go on to college or a two-year school once they graduate. But Dyer is seeing more students who did not know what they wanted to do come to her office excited about their post-high school plans.

"They realize going to college will make them more successful, maximize their employability and make them more marketable," she said.