

## **Eaton coaches in the classroom and on the court**

In the classroom, in basketball and in life, Professor of Digital Technologies Heidi Eaton believes in learning, taking calculated risks, growing, and above all else—never giving up.

As a digital technologies instructor, Eaton helps students become computer literate through classes that provide introductory or in-depth experience using the computer, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access. "I teach my students efficiency and professionalism so they can spend more time and effort focusing on their goals," says Eaton. "So often, what we teach ourselves isn't the most efficient, effective way. I show my students where to look but I don't tell them what to see."

Coaching the Larkin High School freshman girls' basketball team alongside her daughter Kylie is a slam dunk for Eaton, who loves the game and enjoys seeing players practice, get better, try new things, and work together as a team—much like her students at ECC who learn concepts, practice and apply them as they continually improve.

"In my classroom and on the court, I encourage my students and players to learn from failures and celebrate their successes," says Eaton. "At the end of the semester and at the end of the season, there is no better feeling than teaching the importance of discipline, hard work, team effort, dedication, determination and the heart it takes to win—not only in sports, but in life."

Eaton's winning philosophy has earned her several awards and recognition for teaching. She was recently honored with the prestigious Illinois Business Education Association (IBEA) Post-Secondary Teacher of the Year Award and was elected to serve as the association's member at large, and she received the Illinois Association for Career and Technical Education (IACTE) Post-Secondary Teacher of the Year Award. Eaton was also previously recognized at an International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence where she was given a National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence in Teaching Award.

We caught up with Eaton to learn more about her life and her work at ECC. Here is what she had to say.

### **In your words, what do you do at ECC?**

I teach, I learn, I fail, and I succeed. My head never stops thinking of ideas for activities that will help the students engage. I think about those ideas on my way home, in the middle of the night, over breakfast, and on my way to work. I plan and I assess—including grading all night. I never stop thinking of work (ask my husband). But I'll do it again and again because it's what the students deserve. It's my passion. It's what I do.

### **What is your greatest accomplishment since you've been here?**

Getting hired!

**What would you do if you were ECC president for a day?**

I would teach a class! I never want to leave the classroom.

**If there was a movie about your life, who would you want to play you?**

Jennifer Garner, she puts family first. Despite life struggles, she stays positive. She's simple.

**What's on your "bucket list?"**

Lots of things! The next would be an IRONMAN Triathlon.

**What do you enjoy doing outside of work?**

I love spending time with my daughter, Kylie, who is an English teacher at Larkin High School, and my sons Austin, a firefighter/paramedic, and Weston, who is studying history at Aurora University. All three are superstars; they have worked hard and are very successful!

I also enjoy running, biking, kayaking, hiking, cooking, listening to audiobooks, traveling and shopping.

**Where was the best place you've traveled to?**

Prague, Czech Republic.

**Where would you like to visit?**

Getting to travel internationally for work is enriching! I would like to visit any of the countries with the top ten education systems, such as Finland or Ireland.

**What's one fact we should know about you?**

I may make many mistakes and take on too much, but I don't quit.

**What's something about your job that others should know?**

I'm not perfect. I love to learn from my mistakes. I love being in the classroom. Meetings, not so much.

**What would be your "theme song?"**

Rachel Platten's "[Fight Song](#)"

**What was your favorite class in school?**

Any math or computer course, physical education, or English. Pretty much everything except science and history.

**What was your first job out of school?**

I started as a legal secretary for Chicago's Altheimer & Gray, then a top 10 law firm. My last position there was as a computer trainer and I had the great opportunity to travel to our international offices to train lawyers, paralegals and secretaries on the firm's computer systems. I left to work for a local community college as its first personal computer trainer.

**What quote best describes your philosophy?**

"The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see." – Alexandra K. Trenfor

**Complete this sentence: "I enjoy working at ECC because..."**

I am learning all the time. There are so many opportunities. It is a place where failures transform into learning moments and successes are celebrated. Everyone has something to offer and everyone is willing to share. It's a place that my family has attended, and it has made a positive impact on our lives—it is my home away from home.