

Striving to achieve her goals

Martinez attributes success in part to migrant school

BY SUE MATCHA

This fall, Melanie Martinez will be attending Michigan State University in Lansing, Michigan. When she begins classes at the college on Sept. 3, it will be a proud and historic moment for her entire family.

Although Martinez has considered Grafton her home the entire 18 years of her life, every fall she returned to Texas with her mother and siblings where they remained until spring. For children of a migrant family like the Martinezes, that annual move always interfered with their education, often setting them back when compared to what their peers had learned.

“I think of myself as a fast learner and we can learn anywhere if we put our mind to it,” Martinez commented. “But the classes were always different (in North Dakota compared to Texas), sometimes I would be ahead and at other times playing catch up.”

The Migrant School Program conducted in Grafton during the summer months is a saving grace for students like Martinez who said it more than helped fill the gap when it came to gaining the knowledge lost during the move and transition to another school. “We had a lot of math, English and reading, that helped put us ahead when we were going to be traveling,” Martinez said of the program. “We were never behind because we went there. I was actually always ahead and earned some credits early.”

After returning to Texas in the fall of her sophomore and junior years, Martinez said she took some of her classes through the Grafton School District online. She stayed in Grafton her entire senior year, graduating from Grafton High School

in May, with a couple of online college classes to her credit. Before graduation, she applied to the University of Michigan under the advisement of an aunt who informed her of programs offered at the college for migrant students.

This summer, Martinez worked two jobs – full-time on the production line at Marvin Windows and Doors and also as a lifeguard at the Grafton pool – to help fund her future education.

Her work ethic is evident in the high goals she has set for her future. She has chosen psychology and sociology for her majors and hopes to eventually earn a PhD. Her final goal is to someday open her own clinic and start a family.

Martinez will be the first person in her immediate family to attend college. Of course they are all very proud of her accomplishment, and likewise she is proud to be a good role model for her younger siblings. This fall, her brother will follow in her footsteps remaining in Grafton to complete his high school education with hopes of attending college next fall. They are both fine examples of what can be achieved when an individual puts goals into place and strives to reach them.

“My family is proud of me and love what I have accomplished because I am the first generation (to go to college). They are very excited, also a little nervous because I am going kind of far away,” she added.

Martinez gives credit to her teachers with the migrant school program, as well as at Grafton High School with helping her reach her goals.

“All my teachers were very inspirational, they knew I could do it and always believed in me even when I didn’t believe in myself,” Martinez commented. “If the migrant school were to close it would bring the children down. They would struggle, probably wouldn’t graduate or go to college.”



Photo by Sue Matcha

Grafton grad Melanie Martinez has worked two jobs this summer to pay for her college education. She is the first member of her immediate family to attend college and is enrolled at Michigan State.