

Kelly Gimmller

Kelly Gimmller decided in third grade to become a teacher. Perhaps it was the caring atmosphere in Mrs. Bullis' Virginia Lake classroom or the excitement of learning, but she knew then that she wanted to provide the same level of compassion and acceptance she had received that year.

This spring the former Palatine High School student graduated from Judson College with a degree in Special Education. She counted her next-door neighbor and friend, Robbie, who had Downs Syndrome, in helping put her on that path. Her resolve was also reinforced with involvement at Winston Campus Junior High's Best Buddies, an organization promoting one-to-one friendships with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The road to becoming a teacher, however, was not without challenges.

"Judson isn't inexpensive; I walked away with some loans, (\$40,000, equal to one year's tuition at Judson College in Elgin.) I am grateful for the scholarship and donor support given to me through the years to make this journey happen," explained Kelly. "It wasn't easy. Faith made the difference in trusting that it would all come together, and it did." It took six scholarships and also a Go-Fund-Me account, which Kelly set up herself, to reach that goal. She credits EB 211's financial and mentor support in getting her there.

"I would not have been able to do this without EB 211. Its financial support helped me primarily in getting needed textbooks for classes. The group meetings I attended reminded me I wasn't alone in this journey, and my mentor's, (Bonnie Stanos), support served as a great reminder to keep pushing through."

Kelly has accepted two positions with Elgin Area School District U46: a five-week summer program teaching thirteen students, and a position at Larson Middle School teaching math and science. Kelly's teaching philosophy is this: "My hope is to have my students embrace their abilities and push away labels while striving to become passionate in all they do.