

***"I went out in the working world and discovered that what I could do without an education wasn't really anything that I wanted to do for the rest of my life."***

— Cathy Plopper '95

Cathy Plopper '95, a paralegal in the law office of T. Mark Barbieri in Somers, CT, has included Elms College as a beneficiary in her estate plans.

After a brief stint at a state college, Cathy decided to go directly into the working world. She returned to school in her 30s and graduated from Elms with an associate's degree in paralegal studies and a Certificate of Advanced Paralegal Studies.

"Paralegal studies was something I was always interested in, but there weren't a lot of programs around when I got out of high school," Cathy said. "My sister's friend said the Elms program was great and I looked into it, liked what I saw and decided I would apply.

"The interactions I had with the attorneys who taught the paralegal classes was great," she said. "If someone [I knew] wanted to go to the Elms, I would tell them to go – I'll drive you there. It's a wonderful little community, and it's one of the best education experiences that you'll ever have."

Following graduation, her connection to Elms grew through an active and very supportive alumnae group in Connecticut.

"The women were phenomenal; they were just so connected and so caring about each other. It was great," Cathy said.



That support group of alumnae helped her pursue a job prospect sent to her by the Career Services office at Elms a few years after graduation. Although the law firm originally wanted a legal secretary, Cathy says her skills impressed the lawyers into hiring a paralegal instead.

"They were very happy with my skills, and what I could do and what I knew," Cathy said. "I was on a little higher level than a couple of other people working there, because they were legal secretaries. They didn't know how to look up statutes; they didn't know how to brief cases – that sort of thing. What I learned [at Elms] helped me very much to get going in the field."

Because Cathy knows firsthand how hard it can be to pay for school while working full time, she hopes her gift will help ease the burden a little for other nontraditional students.

**Make a Planned Gift Today**

If you would like more information about making a planned gift, contact Bernadette Nowakowski '89, '08, Director of Development and legacy giving, at 413-265-2214 or [nowakowskib@elms.edu](mailto:nowakowskib@elms.edu).