

CORINA YETTER '22 embraces law school, sharing campus with her daughter

By Carla Meyer

Corina Yetter '22 overcame considerable obstacles before starting UC Davis School of Law at age 48 — and one smaller, yet vital one.

Yetter, who re-entered college in 2014 after a long hiatus, was finishing her bachelor's degree at Chico State when she first considered applying to King Hall. Attending law school would fulfill a wish she had carried since working as a legal secretary in her 20s.

But she first had to run it by her daughter, **Brianna Yetter**, who already attended Davis as a first-year biology major.

"I didn't want her to think I was following her," Yetter said. "Kids want separation from their parents."

But Brianna encouraged her mother to come to Davis. "I already knew UCD is a fantastic school, and she would love it, too," Brianna said. Now both are on track to graduate in 2022.

The embarrassed child/gung-ho parent dynamic perpetuated by matriculation comedies like Rodney Dangerfield's "Back to School" and Melissa McCarthy's "Life of the Party" would not be present here. The Yetters have gone through too much together for that.

On Mother's Day in 2019, Yetter's husband, Mike, suffered a massive heart attack. He survived, after a five-way bypass, and spent the summer recovering.

Corina cared for him and assumed his household duties in the Yetters' home in the small Sutter County town of Sutter, where Brianna and her 17-year-old brother, Logan, both also are still at home. Mike returned to work just as Corina began her 1L year.

"It was kind of a traumatic way to start law school," Corina said.

The family already had weathered a lot. During the Great Recession, Mike lost his well-paying construction job, and the Yetters eventually lost a home to foreclosure. After a second construction job also failed to pan out, Mike announced he wanted to go to nursing school.

"I burst out crying," Corina recalled. Worried about finances, she also was "jealous, because I wanted to go back to school."

When she had worked in small law offices, she essentially functioned as a paralegal, Yetter said. "I did everything

except go to court ... and I started realizing, 'I am doing all this work, and he is getting a lot of money. I think I could do his job.'"

It was still "a very sexist time," Yetter said. She did not know any female attorneys in her rural town, and viewed a law degree as a far-off dream. Plus, she had wanted to stay at home when her kids were young.

But Mike's educational dreams revived her own, and the couple made a deal. Corina would support the family while Mike went to school, and he would return the favor. With supplies from a dollar store, Corina started a janitorial business, cleaning other people's foreclosed homes for real estate agents.

Once Mike became a nurse, Corina returned to school, embracing re-entry with an enthusiasm verging on the Dangerfield-esque. Except her passion is learning, not keg stands.

"I want to explore everything," Yetter said. She co-chairs the King Hall Legal Foundation, belongs to the Christian Legal Society, and is a fixture at law school events.

She has been "super impressed" by her UC Davis Law professors' knowledge and commitment to their students, she said.

"They are so willing to talk to students about their goals ... and use their own resources to connect students to someone who can help them."

Professor Clay Tanaka helped Yetter get a job with the Yuba County District Attorney's office last summer through his connection there. Yetter credits Professor Irene Joe, a former public defender, with furthering Yetter's interest in someday becoming an assistant D.A.

"Through her stories about her experience as a public defender, she was the first one to introduce me to the idea of a progressive prosecutor," Yetter said.

Under the stay-at-home orders of the pandemic, Corina and Brianna have spent more time together than when they attended UC Davis in person, when they "had different schedules and were on different parts of the campus," Corina said. But last year, they did make it a point to meet on Fridays, at Mishka's Café or Ike's sandwich shop in downtown Davis.

She's glad to have her mom as a schoolmate, Brianna said.

"I knew going back to school, and becoming a lawyer, were long-standing dreams of hers. I'm happy she could finally pursue them." ■



Brianna Yetter (left) with her mother, Corina Yetter '22