

June 2010 Postscript to "Garden Variety Success Story" by Kathy Heer

Michael has just completed his junior year at Virginia Commonwealth University and I am happy to tell you that he continues to be a garden variety success story. He is on track to graduate in four years, unlike many of our friends' kids! Michael has stayed on the path that RMA put him on. He made the dean's list twice in his first three years of college. We were very proud of the A he earned in Physics at RMA, but doubly proud of the A he got in his college physics class! During his sophomore year he felt that he was in over his head in one class and wanted to drop it, but missed the deadline. He dug his heels in and finished the course with a solid C. The study habits he acquired while at RMA clearly have served him well as he has turned out to be a solid, responsible college student.

Midway through his freshman year Michael decided to get a part time job. Over 100 college students interviewed for the coveted position of banquet servers at the prestigious Commonwealth Club in downtown Richmond. Michael was one of 20 students hired that year and I think his military bearing and self confidence, as well as his shined shoes, helped him get the job. Michael has done well in this job and continues there with increased responsibilities over the years. He has served the governor, and many political figures and celebrities at the various dinners, parties and banquets held at this facility. During the summers Michael has worked as a classroom assistant in the autism program in Arlington Public schools. He was assigned to a particularly difficult child and apparently did such a great job that the child's parents and therapist offered him some special training and then hired him two hours a day (at \$25 an hour!!!) to work with the youngster at home every day after summer school. He considered changing majors for a brief time but continues to be a Criminal Justice/Homeland Security Major but has used his electives to take some special education courses.

The friends Michael made at RMA continue to be a part of his life. There were several RMA students who started with him at VCU whom he continues to see on campus. He remains in close contact with several classmates from RMA who are also from the Washington metropolitan area. During winter break a year ago Michael and two other RMA grads got together to go skiing, a fourth boy joined them for the day even though he could not ski. He just went along to be with his buddies! Michael remains closest to his former RMA roommate and is spending a week with him and his family in North Carolina as I write this.

As I wrote in my original story, Michael went to RMA seemingly without any particular interests or passions. After playing basketball for three years at RMA, he has continued to play on a casual level, getting together with friends several times a week at VCU for pick-up games. He was introduced to Mountain Biking by two brothers at RMA and he has really become a competent, enthusiastic rider, having hit most of the best trails and venues on the east coast in the last few years. He stays in touch with the young men

who introduced him to the sport, one of who visited us briefly from Utah last winter break.

So in short, the RMA “effect” lasted in our case. The skills, confidence and first class education Michael gained at the Academy provided a very firm foundation for our son to build on. He is a fine young man at 21, responsible, caring and hard working. He still needs a little parental nudge from time to time but is doing fine. Oh yes, and his story on the RMA website? Michael just noticed it for the first time last winter! He called me, *“Mom did you know there was a whole story about me on the RMA website?”* I reminded him that I had told him about it years ago, and asked again if he minded it being there for all the world to see. *“No, I don’t mind”* he said, *“ They did a good job.”*