

# Seven children support Mom's PhD dream

By Chantall Van Raay

With seven children of her own, Angela Mandich had the best study guide.

The 39-year-old mother, who graduates with a PhD in Kinesiology today, says specializing in the motor learning skills of children was easier because of her own experience.

Her children, ranging from age seven to 16, her husband Mark and other family members, will watch proudly as Mandich receives a Doctor of Philosophy she worked relentlessly towards for the past four years.

"Sometimes there are obstacles, but it's really worth it," she says. "Never say never - that's what really helped me get through."

With seven kids, Brownies, Cub Scouts, sports, sessional teaching, and late nights at the library, how did she do it?

"Persistence and perseverance," she says. "Sometimes I was here until 1 or 2 in the morning. In some ways I think you can't get those times back, but in other ways it has really been about persistence and setting that goal and working towards it and that's a good thing to model for the kids."

Her husband Mark, who is a firefighter in London, also played a part in her success. "My husband has been very supportive. He has done all of the cooking and cleaning for the past four

years so I will have to learn how to operate the vacuum cleaner again. I think that will be my biggest challenge that comes out of this."

Going back to school was easier because of a \$20,000 pediatric scholarship she received from the Canadian Occupational Therapy Foundation and the Hospital for Sick Kids. Her work as a sessional professor in pediatrics also helped ease her financial strain. She is now saving for her children's postsecondary dreams, she says.

Mandich, who obtained her Masters in Occupational Therapy (OT) from Western in 1997, has taught in the School of Occupational Therapy part-time since 1995 and was hired as a full-time assistant professor in July 2000. In January 1998, she decided to work towards a PhD, which she successfully completed last June. In her first year of the program, she had her seventh child.

Mandich is looking forward to graduating this afternoon for two reasons. Not only will her family see her graduate, but she will graduate at the same time as a group of Masters students she teaches.

Her advice for parents who want to go back to school is simple. "If you want to do something and you set your mind towards that goal and sort of work your way to achieve that," she says, "you will overcome any obstacle you meet along the way."



Photo: Chantall Van Raay, WESTERN NEWS

Angela and Mark Mandich and their seven children, clockwise from top left, Colin, 8, Hilary, 10, Matthew, 15, Scott, 13, Genna, 11, Meghan, 7 and Gillian, 16.