

Published on *Work Goes Strong* (<http://work.lifegoestrong.com>)

<http://work.lifegoestrong.com/life-change-giving-scholarships-moms>

Life Change: Giving Scholarships for Moms

By Susan Crandell
Published Sep 1, 2011



"When I was a senior in high school, my parents divorced and money was scarce. I had to figure out how to get college funding on my own. A local group made a big difference by offering me a \$1,000 scholarship," Susan Andersen says. When she earned a degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, she promised herself that one day she would find a way to give back.

Two decades later, that's exactly what she did. At 43, her 22-year marriage ended and she became a single mother of two teenagers. A successful sales director at Mary Kay Cosmetics ("I drove a pink Cadillac and everything"), Andersen felt it was time to make good on her promise.

Scholarships for Women with Kids

She created the [Answer Scholarship Endowment](#), which has given 37 scholarships to mothers in and near Mecklenburg, South Carolina, where Andersen lives, since 2006. Applicants must have school-age kids and be earning a four-year degree or a two-year nursing degree.

Endowing the scholarships was the easy part. Andersen put up the money herself, though she is now looking for outside donations to broaden the program, which as far as she knows is the only scholarship in the U.S. that is exclusively for women with kids. The tricky part was setting it up: "I knew nothing about running a nonprofit. I'd never even served on a nonprofit board," Andersen says.

Andersen calls the learning curve daunting, but she jumped right in. "My CPA introduced me to Foundation for the Carolinas, which provided expertise both on how to manage the finances and how to screen potential recipients."

Financial Aid Success Stories

There are some stirring success stories. "This is where my sense of purpose and fulfillment comes from," Andersen says. One woman, born when her mother was 14, graduated in December with a degree in teaching. "Her daughter made honor roll, motivated by her mother going back to school," Andersen says. "Many of these women are the first college grads in their family, and their children see the benefits of education first-hand." Another scholarship recipient got a masters in social work, and her daughter just completed her freshman year at the same college her mother attended.

"I'm learning every day," says Andersen, who still works part-time for Mary Kay. "I want to educate the moms, but my deep-down passion is to break the poverty cycle and help their kids. I can change their destiny by educating their mothers."

Read another amazing [career reinvention](#) story.

Source URL: <http://work.lifegostrong.com/life-change-giving-scholarships-moms>