

## Student Parent Month Feature: Heather DaCunha



At 38, Heather DaCunha is rewriting the story of her life—not just for herself, but for her 2-year-old son, Jensen.

Heather spent almost her entire adult life working at her mother’s law firm as a secretary/legal assistant, but everything shifted when she found out she was pregnant at 36.

“I realized I couldn’t

expect my son to value education if I didn’t show him what it looked like,” she says.

While she was pregnant, Heather started pursuing her education and earned her HSED. A week after receiving her HSED, Jensen was born.

She enrolled at Inver Hills Community College to pursue a paralegal degree, but her first semester, Spring 2024, was devastating.

“I failed every class except one,” she says. “It was discouraging, but I didn’t quit.”

Heather has no outside help so for every class and every assignment, she had to work around Jensen's needs.

“That usually means staying up late after I put him down for bed or getting up early, but there isn’t much extra time left between school and taking care of my son,” said Heather.

Things began to turn when she connected with her advisor, Rob Harris who has worked with her to make sure she can achieve her goals while still having her son by her side—from navigating financial aid, scholarships, and government assistance to exploring career paths.

After realizing her true passion was working with youth, she switched her major to psychology with a minor in child advocacy. Her dream is to work in juvenile justice where she can guide kids to better paths through therapy, programs, and support. She will transfer to the University of St. Catherine in spring 2026.

Heather currently works part-time at the campus food pantry at Inver Hills with Jensen in tow.

“He’s basically the mascot,” she laughs. “Everyone knows if I’m on campus, he’s with me.”

To other parenting students, Heather's message is simple: "Ask for help. You can do it. It's hard, but it's worth it. You're not alone."

For Heather and Jensen, this journey means more than a degree, it means stability, a future, and proof that it's never too late to start again.