

Family gets new lease on life at LWTC



Staff photo/lan Gleadie

Teri, Janice and Trent Bruch are getting their lives back in order thanks to Lake Washington Technical College.

by Deborah Stone
Staff Writer

Janice Bruch and her two children, Trent, 24, and Teri, 22, have not had an easy life.

Ever since the local woman's husband walked out on the family 10 years ago, they've had a tough time making ends meet. "We've really been living by the edge of our teeth," says Bruch, "because when my ex left, he took everything and I've never been able to get any financial support from him."

The family was abandoned while they were living in Canada, as Bruch's husband, a surgeon and senior officer in the U.S. Navy, was working there at the time. It eventually took the intervention and help

of the Canadian government for Bruch and her children to be able to move back to the States.

They returned to San Diego, where Bruch had been raised. The family went about trying to reestablish a life for themselves, but with no money, it proved difficult.

Bruch, an artist, took on a variety of jobs, from house painting to housecleaning. Though she applied for assistance, very little came through.

She says, "We didn't fit the profiles at the right times and we just seemed to keep falling through the net. Our lives spiraled out of control and things went from bad to worse."

Unable to pay rent, the

family was evicted from their apartment. They spent a period of time couch surfing and staying with friends. And they also lived out of their car. People they thought they could count on for help failed them.

The situation got more extreme and there came a time when the family's safety was in jeopardy. That's when Bruch knew it was time to leave.

Thankfully, Trent's godfather, a man who lives in the Seattle area, came to the rescue. Last December, he brought the family up to Woodinville and got them in an apartment, promising to help them get back on their feet.

Bruch and her kids decided to use the time to go to school in order to gain necessary job skills to ensure a more promising future.

All three ended up enrolling at Lake Washington Technical College in Kirkland.

Bruch is currently studying multimedia design production, while Trent is involved in the auto repair program and Teri is working toward a degree in Computer Security and Network Technology.

"We discovered that the college had something for each of us," explains Bruch. "And we liked the fact that it wasn't an overwhelming place where it would be easy to feel lost. The people there have been great, very friendly and helpful. Plus, the college has a lot of resources which we've been able to tap into."

Bruch adds that she feels the college provides students with a good education, as the teachers are both knowledgeable and caring. She is enthusiastic about her area of study, as it allows her to use her artistic talents within the sphere of technology. When she finishes her program, she will be able to work as a Web designer, graphic designer or production artist.

For Teri, the experience at LWTC has been positive all around.

"The teachers really make the material fun and interesting," she comments. "I've learned so much in the time I've been there and I'm very excited about my field. I've always liked tinkering and taking apart things, and building computers fascinates me. I'm a self-confessed nerd and proud of it!"

Teri attends the college five days a week and is usually on campus from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m., as she waits until her mom is done with her classes. "They're long days," she adds, "but it's worth it to me because I'm working towards my future."

Teri's teacher, Marvin

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Everest, a veteran instructor in the Computer Security and Network Technology program, is thrilled to have Teri as a student.

He says, "She's one of the brightest, most outstanding students I've ever had. She's energetic, eager to learn and basically a model student — one of those you wish you had more of. She also serves as a mentor to others who need help in the class."

Bruch explains that her son Trent has aspirations to work with the Formula One Racing program. The Auto Repair Technician program at LWTC will prepare him to work on a variety of vehicles and give him the necessary skills to assure employment when he graduates. She comments that he is doing well at school and that he's becoming more confident in himself and his future.

"Janice and her family are a great example of how this college can help you get a new start on life," says Dr. Sharon McGavick, LWTC President. "One of the reasons that LWTC is such a special place for so many of our students is that it's not just about education and training. It's about changing lives."

McGavick points to the college's broad spectrum of degree programs to choose from, which provide real life job training for well-paying jobs in a relative short period of time.

For Bruch, the college has

been a life saver. She adds, "Lake Washington Technical College is enabling us to have a future. It's helped all of us to be optimistic because we're getting a new lease on life."