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*Upward Bound
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1968-1971*



Thank you for creating the opportunity for me to be nominated as a NEOA Achiever candidate. I am honored to be considered for such a prestigious award. I have attended many NEOA Conferences and am always humbled by the wonderful graduates of our programs at the TRiO Achiever Luncheons.

Let me start by talking a little bit about myself. I was an Upward Bound student in the late 60's, many years ago. I came from a family of ten children- five boys and five girls in a rural town in Maine. My father was a very hard working man and my mom stayed home to take care of the flock. We were considered to be very poor. We did not have indoor plumbing or many of the luxuries that our classmates had. We were socially isolated and not exposed to many of the opportunities that children from affluent families were exposed to. The message that was given to me and my family by the townspeople was: "too bad there are so many of them because they won't amount to anything". Poverty back then was equated with stupidity and I was always put in the lower sections each grade I went into and then eventually the teachers found out that even though I was poor I was not stupid. I never thought about college or about anything that was going to happen after I graduated from high school. I just existed.

Then one day a man came to the school and told me that I was selected to go to this program called Upward Bound at the University of Maine. My sister Pam had gone the year before so I knew a little bit about it so I agreed to go. My sister did not continue but I was going to give it a try. Entering Upward Bound was a major turning point in my life and my family's life. I was exposed to culture, sheets on the bed, in fact my own bed, and many other luxuries. However, that was not the most important part of Upward Bound- it was having someone believe in me - having someone tell me that I mattered and that I was college material. People started talking to me about college and what was I going to do with my life.

In high school, I had been skipped over for the National Honor Society even though I had the grades- higher grades than others who were chosen- just because I was a McCue. I was starting to learn that being a McCue was okay. People in Upward Bound saw the potential in me and encourage me to excel. Opening the doors for me has opened doors to my whole family. I have my doctorate in counseling; we have a lawyer, an engineer, a multi-million dollar business owner, a registered dietitian. I could go on and on. I am proud of every member of my family. They have stepped out of the jaws of poverty and the stigma of being nobody because of being from a large rural family and I believe it is due to hard work and the support of Upward Bound and the other Support Services that after come after this door was opened. Thank you for being there for me. There are many McCue families still out there we cannot stop now. Doors still need to be opened and opportunities for young people need to be made.