

## Fitzsimmons '81 Named Moraine Park's 2015 Distinguished Alumnus



“Every woman has a story,” attests Denise Fitzsimmons '81, Moraine Park Technical College's (Moraine Park) 2015 Distinguished Alumnus. As publisher of “InSpire Magazine” – a monthly rag dedicated to empowering women – Fitzsimmons showcases such stories. In doing so, she helps connect women with each other, as well as with resources and support geared to improving their lives.

Fitzsimmons, of Beaver Dam, Wis., graduated from Moraine Park with a degree in fashion merchandising and marketing before enjoying a successful career in publishing and co-founding “InSpire.” It turns out, design, fashion and publishing work well together.

“I started out after college in retail, then moved to a newspaper in Portage designing advertisements,” she said. “I ultimately moved to Conley Publishing Inc., where I worked from 1985-2004 and ended up as advertising director.

Still, Fitzsimmons craved more. A desire to empower others, especially women, spurred her to co-launch “InSpire.” She did so with two other women – 2006 Moraine Park Distinguished Alumnus Mary Beth Bockhorst and sister-in-law, Jill Huizenga. Eleven years later, “InSpire” touts a readership of 10,000 throughout the Wisconsin counties of Fond du Lac, Dane, Jefferson and Dodge. Since the magazine's founding, it has donated \$150,000 to area charities and nonprofits.

“I believe in helping out and giving back to the community,” she said. “I do it because it's the right thing to do.” As such, Fitzsimmons is an active volunteer. She is a member of the Second Christian Reformed Church, in Randolph; the Beaver Dam Rotary Club; the Beaver Dam Community Hospitals Inc. Foundation Board; and the Beaver Dam Chamber of Commerce Marketing Committee, among many others. She's also given back to her alma mater through the years. She has served as celebrity chef for the Moraine Park Foundation and showcased many “InSpire” stories featuring Moraine Park programs, students and staff.

Fitzsimmons, who believes wholeheartedly in the value of a technical education, maintains she draws daily from the skills and life lessons learned while studying at Moraine Park. “The skills I learned at school in fashion merchandising helped me get where I am today,” she said.

After graduating in 1978 from Central Wisconsin Christian School, in Waupun, Fitzsimmons attended a four-year college in Iowa before transferring to Moraine Park. “It was a better fit for me,” she said. “I enjoyed Moraine Park’s small classes and very informative instructors. They wanted to help students learn and often invited us to their homes for dinners and study sessions.” In addition to developing critical marketing and business skills, Fitzsimmons honed her communication, problem-solving and leadership proficiency.

As a result of her experience, she urges high school graduates to consider Moraine Park as their next step in learning and life. Simultaneously, she encourages Moraine Park graduates to enthusiastically go after their dreams.

Fitzsimmons will address students and graduates at the Moraine Park Student Awards Banquet, May 8, where she’ll share a favorite quote by inspirational author Martha Bolton. “There is nothing sadder than an unfulfilled life,” said Bolton. “Dreams don’t come with expiration dates.”