

Leadership and Empathy in Action: Tanya Freeman, '08, Esq.



In 2008—nearly 20 years past what she had planned for, Tanya Freeman graduated from Caldwell College. “God determines the path of our lives,” she says.

She grew up with four siblings in a family headed by a single father, who had big dreams for his children and impressed upon them the value of education. Despite his lack of formal education, he nevertheless encouraged all his children to learn, grow, and achieve. His vision for Freeman, which became her dream when she was eight years old, was for her to become an attorney.

The challenges Freeman’s family faced when she was a child brought about financial hardships that placed her on a non-traditional path to college. Tragedy struck when her beloved father died when she was just 14 years old; during the remainder of her adolescence, she was raised by her older siblings and extended family. Freeman credits the lessons her father taught her with helping her to remain focused and resilient.

After high school, Freeman attended Marymount College, but in her junior year had to drop out when she could no longer afford the tuition. She landed a full-time job at a prominent insurance company and her career quickly took off. Then one day she was considered for a promotion, one that required the college degree she had never obtained.

Freeman enrolled at Caldwell College, attending classes on nights and weekends while working full-time and raising six young children. Any student looking for inspiration to achieve a goal need only think of Freeman’s journey.

After graduating cum laude from Caldwell

College, Freeman took the next step in fulfilling her dream, when she earned her juris doctorate, cum laude, from the Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center at Touro College.

Today, Tanya Freeman Law, LLC, located in East Hanover, specializes in family law, including divorce, child and spousal support, child custody, and domestic violence. Freeman’s six children now range from age 13 to 30; three of her children have graduated from college and two have master’s degrees.

For her dedication to advocacy, family, service, and community, Freeman has received numerous awards. In 2014, former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie appointed Freeman to Newark’s University Hospital Board of Directors, for which she now serves as Chair of the Board. She was named Family Lawyer of the Year by the Hudson County Bar Association in 2016.

In 2018, Freeman received Caldwell University’s Veritas Award, its highest alumni honor, for Excellence in Law and Family Services. In 2019 she established

the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Student Emergency Fund to provide financial support for unexpected and emergent needs to students enrolled in the EOF program.

Natalia Tomcyk '20, one of the many students who benefited from Freeman’s generosity shared, “Due to the EOF Student Emergency Fund, I was able to graduate this semester and finally become the nurse I’ve dreamed to be and help others during these difficult times. I am ever so grateful and can’t wait to change the world.”

EOF program students come from difficult socioeconomic backgrounds. Due to a lack of financial security, these students often face obstacles that can prevent them from remaining in school. Considering her struggles as a young woman, Freeman hopes to serve as a role model and mentor to students from financially challenged backgrounds. She has been a motivational speaker at several EOF events and is providing mentorship to an EOF student who aspires to a law career. In the current COVID-19 crisis, the EOF Student Emergency Fund has become a vital source of support. ■

—Christina Hall

