

Still a student, already a published author

Welcome to 24/7.

That's the name being given to a series of profiles of Northeast and North Central Nebraskans who either are 24 years old now or were at some point in 2011. The Daily News encouraged readers to suggest possible participants in the series, and seven were chosen to be included in the Daily



"I love that I will be able to help people return to doing things they enjoy, and knowing I'm helping make a difference in someone's life."

STEPHANIE WALTON
News' Insight 2012
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Jerry Guenther of the Daily News posed a series of questions to Stephanie Walton, a graduate of Ewing High School — author, student and future occupational therapist.

What's your dream job?

Occupational therapist.

Are you married? Do you have children?

No and no. I do, however, have a 2-year-old Yorkshire Terrier, Tucker, who keeps me entertained and is great company, also a

very good distraction from the stress of life.

Have your views on marriage or work changed since high school?

In a sense, no, but I think as you get older you definitely realize how important family really is.

Since graduation, I have focused on becoming an occupational therapist, so I have focused all of my time and effort into my studies to make that a reality. I feel having a career is imperative in today's society, and it is even better when you enjoy the work you do.

What do you like most about your life?

I think the thing I like most about my life is that I had the opportunity to go to college and study what I had a passion for and, in doing so, I will have a career doing what I wanted . . . the knowledge and ability to help people. I am very lucky to have the love and support of my family and

friends; I know I can always count on them.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Hanging out with friends and family, going to the movies, traveling, having slumber parties with my two little cousins on the weekends, playing with my dog, cooking, riding horse and shopping.

Do you stay in contact with your family or friends from high school?

I am very close with my family, so, of course, we are in contact, sometimes every day. As for my classmates since high school, it is harder to stay in touch, but we try our best, and, of course, there is always Facebook.

Knowing what you do now, what advice would you give yourself on your high school graduation date?

First off, know that life is short, so you need to do what you believe is right for you, and usually your gut instinct is right on. Take the opportunities that may arise, such as a chance to study abroad, or anything you find interesting, and remember to enjoy every minute of the experience. Also do not be afraid to change your mind in what you want to study or do in life because it is important to do something that makes you happy and what you have a passion for.

What's the last book you read or movie you watched?

Well, it has been a while since I have read for pleasure, so most of the books I have read recently are textbooks. I really enjoy watching movies, and the last one I watched was "The Help."

Who has had the most influence

on you in your life so far?

That would have to be my best friend, who has

been my best friend since we were 4 years old. She's a very strong, courageous and inspiring individual, and I'm very lucky to have her in my life.

Is there anyone you consider a role model?

My mom, Teresa. She has let me choose my own path in life, and has been more than a parent, but also a friend who I can talk to about anything. She is a hard worker who has put the needs and wants of her children above her own. She's a strong and amazing woman, whom I'm lucky enough to call mom.

Do you have a motto you try to live by?

There are two. "Live every day like it's your last." Also, "Life isn't what happens to you; it's how you perceive it."



COURTESY PHOTO

STEPHANIE WALTON (left) and some of her family members went to Loveland, Colo., for a family reunion. Also shown are Jenna Funk (being held by her mother), Maria Funk and Maria's other daughter, Emma Funk (standing in front). Next are Jenny Osborne and Cheri Frisch (far right).



COURTESY PHOTO

WITH HER FRIEND, Shayna Miller (right), and Stephanie Walton went to Mexico during spring break.

About Stephanie Walton

Stephanie Walton graduated from Ewing High School, then went on to Nebraska Wesleyan University. There, she studied exercise science and psychology, earning a bachelor of science.

She is currently a graduate occupational therapy student at the College of Saint Mary in Omaha and is completing the first of two 12-week fieldwork rotations at Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk. She will complete her second fieldwork rotation in Lexington, Ky., at a skilled nursing facility.

During her last semester of school, she took part in a class project. In doing so, she wrote a book, "Two Best Friends and a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)," to educate children on what a traumatic brain injury is and friendship.

The book is now available on Amazon.com.

"I wanted to write this book for two reasons, first was for my best friend who had suffered a TBI and has been my inspiration and driving force to become an occupational therapist," Walton said.

"Secondly, there were limited resources available for children and with the increasing incidence of traumatic brain injury as well as those soldiers coming back from war, to help explain it in a format suitable for children was important."

Walton has traveled to England, as well as to Mexico twice. She grew up a truck driver's daughter and traveled to many states.

When she has time off, Walton likes to spend it with her family and friends. In the summers, she enjoys going to Neligh to the drive-in theater.

She eventually would like to become a traveling occupational therapist, traveling and seeing a variety of people and settings.