Holly Hill mom, daughter reap rewards of teamwork

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DAYTONA BEACH — When Joan Burnett decided to return to college for interior design after 25 years in the workforce, she didn’t know it would take eight years to finish.

The Holly Hill mother, who initially started taking night classes, had to take time off for breast cancer treatments. She never gave up and now with her 18-year-old daughter, Angela Biancelli, by her side, will walk across the stage to get their associate degrees from Daytona State College.

They share a common bond with Palm Coast family celebrating three graduations from Daytona State College on May 14.

Twin Matthew and Caleb Po- sey and their sister, Rachel, who were all home-schooled since kindergarten, will also receive their associate degrees.

Daytona State College will graduate 3,600 students graduating with associate and bache- lor degrees and certificates, including those who completed programs in the fall but can walk at commencement services. Two ceremonies will take place at 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. at the Ocean Center.

The college, which started the bachelor degree program in 2006, will hit the 1,000-degree mark in the four-year academic program.

Other area colleges will also have commencements that weekend. The University of Central Florida had its graduation ceremonies today.

Burnett has bachelor and master degrees in business administration but went back to school.

“GRADUATION

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because she wanted to be creative and use her business skills. She has since started her own interior design business.

“I was determined to finish,” Burnett said.

Both she and her daughter are graduating with honors and Angela will continue at Daytona State to get a bachelor’s degree, possibly in business or information technology.

While they didn’t have any of the same classes together, they thought it was neat doing their homework at the same time.

“Everybody is always studying here trying to get their projects done,” Burnett said.

Burnett and her husband, Steve, are a blended family, with six children, including Angela’s twin brother, Jared Biancelli, 18, who is in the criminal justice program at Daytona State, and a daughter, Shannon Burnett, 23, who begins summer classes later this month.

Joan Burnett was president of the Daytona State Student Chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers this year and a Daytona State College Hall of Fame award winner and outstanding student.

“I’m really proud of her for making through chemotherapy and never giving up,” daughter Angela Biancelli, said, adding her mom also does fundraisers for breast cancer.

Biancelli received a majority of her associate of arts degree as a dual-enrolled student at Atlantic High School taking college and high school courses.

“It’s absolutely amazing — a one-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” she said about getting her degree.

Three siblings in Palm Coast will have a similar experience.

The three, who also play in the worship band at their parents’ church in St. Augustine, didn’t

know about attending Daytona State College together since they were home-schooled. Rachel Po- sey is only 17 but like her 19-year-old twin brother was in the dual enrollment program for two years, taking college courses at Daytona State while also in high school.

This will be the first time they participate in a large graduation. Last year, since they were home-schooled, they walked across the stage at their parents’ church in St. Augus- tine — where their father is pastor — to receive their high school diplomas.

“It’s awesome,” their mom, Ann Posey, said about seeing three of her four children gra- duate. She and her husband, Da- vid, also have a 13-year-old daughter.

Seeing them do so well, including strong GPAs and Rachel graduating with high honors, “makes me feel good. We are very thankful.”

Up until last semester, the siblings also had many of the same classes together at the Daytona State College Flagler/Palm Coast campus and would help each other study at home and in the car on the way to classes.

Last fall, they were in different classes at America’s main campus in Daytona Beach.

“It made it a lot easier for me,” Rachel Posey said of having her older brother on the larger main campus with her. “We’ve always been so tight. College was really tough first, but when I was 16 I was going into my freshman year.”

Matthew Posey said he “loves” his siblings and “it’s really good” being in classes together — exposed to not knowing anybody on the first day.

His brother, Caleb, who also took music classes at the college’s program at the News-Journal Center, said his siblings were “my study buddies,” calling out questions to one anoth-