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United Supermarkets Team Members Graduate from High School, College at the Same Time

(LUBBOCK, Texas) . It's a proud moment for all graduates when they walk across the stage and receive a diploma marking the end of their high school days.

To graduate and possess an Associate's Degree from a junior college makes the accomplishment even more impressive.

Krista Hernandez, a checker at United Supermarkets' 82nd and Frankford location here, and Kirsten Smith, a checker at the Marsha Sharp Freeway store, were among Frenship High School's Class of 2012 who earned their diplomas at commencement Memorial Day weekend. Each young lady also wrapped up work on an Associate's Degree from South Plains College, meaning they will arrive at college campuses as juniors this August.

"It's exciting, but it's kind of scary jumping in that far," said Krista, who joined the United team last September.

"It was pretty intense at times," said Kirsten, who has been with the company almost two years. "It was a challenge, but it was definitely worth it."

The Frenship school system received a grant through a program called the Early College High School Initiative, which paid for students to earn their Associate's Degree while attending high school. The process began when Krista and Kirsten submitted an essay to apply for the program as eighth-graders.

"We wrote essays to apply for the program that allowed us to earn an Associate's Degree by the time we graduated from high school," Kirsten said. "Our junior year, you took dual-credit classes, and it was pretty difficult. But I wanted to do this and be able to get ahead. So I'm glad I stuck with it."

According to Frenship Independent School District officials, the program began with 63 students and while many earned college-level credit through the program, six completed the demands to claim their Associate's Degree.

"I think the online classes were challenging," said Krista. "You had to be really disciplined for those." Kirsta plans to attend the University of Texas-San Antonio and pursue a Bachelor's Degree in biology. She plans to attend medical school following that.

"You have to be really serious about the program to get through it," she advised. "You have to dedicate yourself to it, and you can't blow stuff off."

Kirsten, meanwhile, plans to attend Abilene Christian University, where she will major in family studies and child life before pursuing a Master's Degree in child development.

I want to have my master's in four years and get in the field to start working, she said. I feel like I've gone this far, and I'm ready for the next step. I love children and I want to be able to help them and serve them, and I want to be able to learn from them too.

She also had great advice for others who might consider a similar approach to their education. Stick with something and don't doubt yourself, she said. This is a less expensive way to get a college degree, and I know I feel like it's all worth it.

About United Supermarkets

Now in its 96th year of operation, United Supermarkets, LLC, is a Texas-based, family-owned grocery chain with stores in 30 markets across north and west Texas. A self-distributing company with its headquarters in Lubbock and distribution centers in Lubbock and Roanoke, United currently operates 51 stores under four distinct formats: [United Supermarkets](#), [Market Street](#), [Amigos](#) and United Express. The company's 52nd store . a fourth-generation Market Street location . is currently under construction in Lubbock.

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