

Catalyst Profile
Elizabeth McLean

As manager of volunteer services at Lutheran Hospice, Elizabeth McLean, the WCU alumna of 2008, has dedicated the past two years of her career to end-of-life care.

Since 2013, McLean has been wearing many hats at the ministry-based nonprofit. Every first Thursday of the month, she mans volunteer training sessions. She also gives in-house presentations at care facilities across the Midlands of South Carolina.

Still, the West Bend, Wis. native found her calling only after graduating from college. In 2006, with an associate degree from Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College in tow, McLean transferred into WCU's history program. There, in the halls of McKee, she met mentors Richard Starnes, Alexander Macaulay, and Gael Graham.

Their collective interest in anything from the American South to concepts of masculinity both intrigued and challenged McLean. In her major coursework, she learned to “write well, read intelligently, and make decisions.”

“History was a very tough program,” said McLean. “But I can’t say enough about WCU’s campus and the professors there.”

Following her two-year stay in the Whee, McLean pushed down the East Coast, ultimately finding a home at Lutheran Hospice in Columbia, South Carolina. Her ability to discuss the American war time, the fiscal turmoil that was the Great Depression, and the controversy of the Vietnam War helped the history buff build connections with older clients, accelerating her career.

Now in her current position, she uses her history degree to educate families and the community about what hospice is. “Giving 110 percent” has allowed McLean to put the talents and abilities of volunteers to work. Having many helping hands aids the hospice team in fulfilling the values, goals and wishes of patients, improving their final days.

Reflecting back on her own history, specifically her time as a student, McLean suggests that current Catamounts immerse themselves in their passions, study diligently, and strive for an end goal.

“Make your best effort; don’t just get by,” said McLean. “Aim for the stars because even though it can be stressful, it is worth it.”