

A Leap of Faith: Speaker knows finding your passion means taking risks

By Suzanne Barnes

When women leave her Beyond Rubies presentation, Karen McCaa hopes they will feel inspired.

“And I hope that I give them joy for their day, happiness for their heart and strength for their spirit,” said McCaa, 35, of North Liberty. McCaa’s topic is “Find Your Passion.” Not surprisingly, her passion is giving inspirational speeches and life coaching.

A counselor at Kirkwood Community College In Cedar Rapids, where the Beyond Rubies conference will be held, McCaa said she can’t tell anyone what his or her passion is. “My job is to help you find it.”

You may find your passion in a childhood pastime that you enjoyed, she said. Or it might be a talent you have that comes so easily you don’t recognize it as a gift.

We need to ask ourselves, she said, what drives us to get out of bed? What gives our life purpose? What makes our heart beat faster? What gives us back more energy than we spend doing it?

Each of us knows what we are passionate about, she said, but something won’t allow us to pursue that passion. Maybe we are afraid of success or maybe we are afraid of failure. “A lot of things factor into how we chase our dream,” she said.

McCaa uses her own life to illustrate finding passion and purpose. After earning her bachelor’s and master’s degrees, she moved back home to Indiana “to be close to my family.”

After a couple of years as a high school guidance counselor in Hope, Ind. she packed her car and headed for Iowa. “It was a total leap of faith,” she said.

Her friends asked, “Why Iowa?” “Just like in the movie ‘The Field of Dreams,’” she said, laughing. “I came out here with a handful of friends and a heart full of hope.”

It’s always a struggle when you move, she said. “And life is going to knock you down, but it’s the getting back up that counts.”

After about three weeks, she found a job at Kirkwood as a counselor. That took care of her physical self.

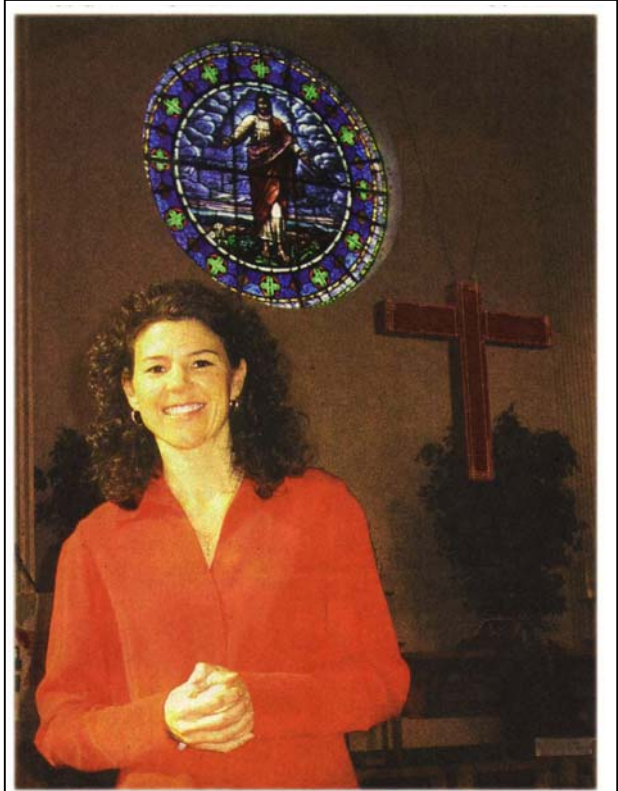
Her spiritual self found a family she can relate to at First Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids. For McCaa, her faith in God is prime in her life.

She said it was a huge risk for her to come to Iowa, “but sometimes we have to take a risk to grow.”

Part of her growth involves a job she was offered in Cedar Rapids. During the summer, McCaa works with the cream of high school athletes at week-long national Nike camps.

“I do motivational talks with them on character, being a role model, making good choices,” she said.

Others counsel the high school seniors-to-be on physical fitness, nutrition and handling the media. McCaa tells them having a great character is more important than being a great athlete.



Karen McCaa -of North Liberty will be one of the keynote speaker& at- this year’s Beyond Rubies women’s conference at Kirkwood Community College on March 16 and 17. McCaa, a counselor at Kirkwood, will talk about “Finding Your Passion,” She was photographed at First Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids, which feeds her spiritual side.

She’s been an athlete herself and is also the daughter of a high school football coach.

As she will with those who attend Beyond Rubies, McCaa shares stories from her life with the young athletes. She includes the leap of faith that moved her from Indiana west to Iowa.

“I know I did not come here by accident. I believe I was led here for a purpose. It is exciting seeing that unfold,” she said.