

The Rudd Family

“Family Affair Series” - October 2014

First-year law student Clint Rudd is no stranger to SIU. He enrolled as a freshman just out of high school in 1994.

He chose to leave school his junior year to take care of his family during and after his father’s illness. Then, he met Tabitha, and a few months later they were engaged to be married. Before they knew it, the couple had three children, twins Harley and Hannah and their youngest son Hunter. All the while, they worked side by side in their own business.



Photo (L to R): Clint, Hannah, Tabitha, and Harley

Rudd finished his bachelor’s degree nearly 17 years later, adding this educational accomplishment to nine years of experience as a business owner and nearly 15 years of military service, including time in Iraq. He said his time in the military opened the door for him to finish his degree as he was one of just 10 chosen for the National Guard Service Academy pilot program. He is now pursuing a master’s degree to continue to advance both academically and in his military career.

When choosing an advanced degree program, Rudd remembered his time at SIU and all that he loved about the university and the region -- the Shawnee Forest, Garden of the Gods, Little Grand Canyon and Giant City State Park. He envisioned hiking, visiting and enjoying those great places and others with his family. The family made the decision to move their family of five from Branson, MO to southern Illinois on Christmas Day in 2012 so that Clint could start school at SIU in the spring 2013 semester.

Tabitha not only supported her husband’s decision to move to Southern Illinois to attend SIU but she also followed his lead and enrolled in school herself. Tabitha recalls her struggles going from a high school dropout to earning her GED to supporting her family as a single parent. Clint convinced her to enroll in college. Her children gave her an extra boost of courage telling her, “Yes, Mom, you can do it. Get in there!” Clint and Tabitha’s oldest son was also accepted to SIU but is currently away with the Illinois National Guard.

Because the entire family was in school at one level or another, the Rudds bought a dining room table specifically for studying together. “The time studying together is important even if we are sitting across the table, not saying anything, just by being there we are all showing our support for each other, knowing that we have each other to lean on and help each other,” Clint said.

With everyone's classes and busy schedules, the Rudds have to manage their time wisely because free time is rare. They haven't had much time to get involved on campus but since Clint had prior experience with the Traveling Vietnam Wall, they offered to help when they heard the wall was coming to the SIU campus and their youngest son, Hunter, volunteered to help.

The Rudd family's story follows a winding path that eventually led them back to SIU. They are excited to be back and offer encouragement to other students. Clint commented, "Don't give up. Work together. Embrace the challenge. Make sure you carve time out for your spouse and family". Tabitha, speaking from personal experience, said, "Don't give up on your education!"

Clint Rudd is a first year law student. Tabitha Rudd is a sophomore pursuing a degree in paralegal studies.