

GRADUATING AS ONE

By Marc Stewart

COEUR d'ALENE - Jon and Elizabeth Hansen are graduating as one. This husband and wife will complete their academic journeys together this Sunday during Lewis-Clark State College Coeur d'Alene's commencement ceremonies.

Each will earn a bachelor's of science nursing degrees.

"Wow!" said Elizabeth Hansen. "It's been a long time."

Jon Hanson grinned broadly, delighted at the prospect of them earning bachelors of science nursing degrees at the same time.

"It's what we've been hoping for," said Jon Hansen. "It's very exciting because there is a finish line."

The LCSC CDA graduation event begins at 2 p.m. at North Idaho College's Schuler Auditorium.

"This couple captures the essence of LCSC CDA family spirit," said Cyndie Hammond, executive director. "We are extremely pleased with their success."

The Hansen's have been married for 19 years, and together they've raised their five sons in Athol. They agree it hasn't been easy to balance school, family and the demands of full-time jobs.

"Our kids have been sacrificing too," said Jon Hansen. "I hope they see what it was for."

Jon Hansen works as a registered nurse at Bonner General Hospital and Elizabeth, is also a registered nurse, works at Kootenai Medical Center.

"It's all about time," said Elizabeth Hansen, "When Jon comes home the question is, "What's due?"

Added Jon, "You get in a mode where you are really focused on what you have to accomplish. Then you had to figure out when the kids had a basketball game or some other activity. It could be intense."

With each class, they studied together and encouraged each other to succeed. Elizabeth said Jon's job was to catch the grammatical errors and her job was to make sure the content was correct.

"Her papers were always perfect," said Jon, with the wisdom of man who has been married for nearly two decades.

The couple even managed to squeeze in date nights.

"We'd eat cheese fries," Elizabeth said. "It was our time."

When asked to describe each other's best qualities, Elizabeth said of her husband, "He has character, loyalty, compassion and honesty."

Jon grinned and replied wisely again.

"Well, she's really hot. And She has the ability to balance kids, school, church and career stuff."