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[Press Release](#)

## Grow Your Own Graduates First Teacher at GSU

University Park, IL, May 26, 2009 - Denise Kranzer always wanted to be a teacher. She loved children, loved education, and loved being involved in her local school district. What she lacked, however, was the bachelor's degree and the time and means to earn it.

Now, thanks to Grow Your Own Teachers, sponsored by the State of Illinois, Kranzer, of Monee, is graduating from Governors State University in June with her degree in elementary education and a chance to fulfill her dream.

Grow Your Own Teachers helps people with ties to the community become qualified teachers in local participating school districts. Participants receive forgivable loans to pay for tuition and fees, grant funds for transportation and childcare expenses, active support from fellow program participants, and the dedicated guidance of professors and school counselors.

To qualify, participants must not have already earned a bachelor's degree. They must be either currently employed in the schools or an active parent or community member, and have the recommendation of the school district.

Kranzer met the criteria perfectly. She had some college credits, is active in the Monee Elementary School P.T.O, operates the before and after school programs at Monee Elementary, and has the support of the administration of Crete-Monee School District 201-U. she was recently elected to the Village of Monee Board of Trustees.

Other students in the South Suburban Grow Your Own program come from Cook County School District 130, Dolton/Riverdale School District 148, Harvey School District 152, Patton School District 133, and Crete-Monee School District. They earn their degrees from Prairie State College and Governors State University, attending either full or part time. Currently, the program has 27 participants. Four students will complete their student teaching in the fall. Kranzer is the first graduate through the program.

"Participants in this program are hard working people like Denise, who want to make a difference in the lives of children. They understand the children in their community and want to help them as much as possible," explained Dr. Colleen Sexton, professor of education, who guides the Grown Your Own students at Governors State University.

Kranzer is looking forward to having a classroom of her own, teaching children with whom she is already familiar, in a system she already knows and understands. "I love working in the school, helping the teachers, and being there for the kids," said Kranzer. "I can't wait to do more."