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PAY IT FORWARD

Woman gives back to Mesa college advisor paying for students' gas, food

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By Pat McReynolds **CONNECT**

MESA, AZ (CBS5) - Helping students succeed is Loretta Damon's job, but she keeps on going long after she clocks out.

College advisors always have their hands full helping students transition into life on their own, but at Mesa Community College, Damon specializes in American Indian students.

"Some of them have not had the city life before," Damon said.

"I have a couple of students that just relocated from the reservation. They don't know how to ride the bus. How to find their own apartment. I take my own car to do that," Damon said.

Maybe that's why when she walks the campus, her students refer to her as "grandma."

"Whatever students need, I'm there for them," Damon said.

"She goes far and beyond," Tina Jones, a MCC graduate, said.

Jones was a single mother when she enrolled at MCC.

Balancing home and student life was tough.

She credits Damon's gentle encouragement for helping her through.

"I don't think quitting is in her vocabulary. She always says, 'you've gotta have a plan. If it's not one, two or three, you gotta go to four or five,'" Jones said.

Damon always has a plan. She keeps bits of her own money on hand all the time for last minute student emergencies, like gas or food.

Jones nominated Damon for CBS 5's Pay It Forward program and this week delivered \$500 cash to Damon.

Damon is a single mother herself, who still pinches pennies for her own two sons and those she considers her children at school.

She never misses graduation ceremonies, taking a little pride in every cap and gown she helped nudge from student to stage.

"I was hired to take care of them and get them graduated, and I love that part when they graduate," Damon said. "I feel a need to help my students, I really do. They are really good kids."

[Do you have someone you'd like to nominate for Pay It Forward? [Click here.](#)]