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## Living & leaving

Mom prepares for empty nest but full life

**STORIES BY ELLEN  
PILIGIAN \* PHOTOS  
BY J. KYLE KEENER**

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It's never easy when your kids leave the nest. But when you're a single mom and your last kid is heading out the door, it can be an especially anxiety-ridden time. No one needs to tell Julie Glasgow that. The Harrison Township mother of two coped with her oldest daughter's departure three years ago when Jennifer, 20, went off to Michigan State University. Now she's got mixed emotions as she looks toward the day her daughter Jaclyn, 18, graduates from high school on June 6. "It's bittersweet. It's the ending; it's the beginning, too. She's ready to move on," says Julie, 44. "It's the right and natural thing."

Nevertheless, Julie worries how she'll feel once Jaclyn officially leaves for Central Michigan University later this summer. "There won't be another person in my house," she says,



Single mom Julie Glasgow, center, 44, of Harrison Township sent daughter Jennifer, left, 20, away to college a few years ago and will be sending Jaclyn, 18, off to school this summer. ( )

### what i learned

As Julie Glasgow prepares to send her second daughter to college, she's facing being home alone.

**Reality check:** The anticipation of the kids leaving is worse than the reality.

**Family trip:** To celebrate time together, go on a special vacation before they leave.

**Calls:** Julie talks to Jennifer every day via cell phone. "I know she's safe, and I'll do the same thing with Jaclyn."

**Less housework:** The workload goes down, particularly when it comes to laundry.

**Pet:** Julie got a puppy to have a warm body in the house when both daughters are gone.

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finding some comfort in her Yorkshire terrier, Sadie, which Julie got two years ago after their two cats died. The joke in the family is that she really got the dog to replace her vacating daughters.

Julie actually fared better than she expected after Jennifer left in 2003.

Looking back, she says the anticipation of the separation was far worse than the reality. "I couldn't imagine her not being around," she says. "Most of it was anxiety building up."

Julie got a reality check when Jennifer came home for Thanksgiving. "I couldn't wait for her to go back," she says half-jokingly. She realized that she and Jaclyn exist more quietly together. "I hadn't known what it was like before. It was nice and peaceful. She came back and it was like, 'Oh my gosh!' "

It also helps that Jennifer, who'll be a senior this fall, calls Julie every day to chat.

But this time, says Julie, it will be different. "That's my anxiety. I keep saying I'm not sure how I'm going to feel when Jaclyn is gone. I really don't know." When Jennifer left, it was the unknown for Julie, who was more concerned with how she would do in school. "Now it's the anticipation of my own loneliness."

**Quality over quantity:** Focus on quality time with your kids since you'll see less of them once they leave home.

**More space:** Enjoy the extra room. Julie is already turning her one daughter's bedroom into an exercise room.

**Time for yourself:** "Enjoy the peacefulness and your own time because mothers really do take care of everyone else," says Julie, who's looking forward to more time to read.

#### **a veteran mom shares what she learned**

Patricia Peart was never anxious when her three sons, now 22, 24 and 26, left the nest. In fact, their departure enabled her to fully focus on making and selling her artwork and made it easier to make a long-desired move from Royal Oak to the west side of the state. Now living in Eau Claire with her retired husband, Randall, Patricia shares why she never suffered separation anxiety:

- **Have a life.** Don't wait for the kids to leave to start your life. Whether you work or volunteer, be sure your kids know what's important to you.
- **Balance is key.** While her kids were the most important thing in her life "when they needed to be," Patricia says it's unhealthy to have kids feel your life revolves around them.
- **Downsize.** Without kids (or worries of uprooting them), you can lower your cost of living with a cheaper, smaller home. Just make sure you always have a bed for them to visit.
- **Move on.** Once the kids are gone, you can go back to school or learn something new.
- **Enjoy the solitude.** Patricia realized after the kids left how much she needed the quiet time without distractions to be creative for her work.
- **Help others.** Other people need taking care of, Patricia reminds. Volunteer with kids, elderly people or animal rescue organizations.

Divorced since 1992, Julie is especially close to the daughters she's raised on her own.

Now she jokes that she has to find a life. "So much of it has revolved around them. They always came first," says Julie, a district manager with Huntington Bank.

Meanwhile, her daughters are supportive. "It's the big step," says Jennifer. Adds Jaclyn: "She's a strong woman. She'll be fine."

Indeed, Julie is already making plans for the emptier nest. Last December, she moved her treadmill into Jennifer's room. "And when Jaclyn leaves, Jennifer's bed will go in there and I'll make an exercise room out of her room," she says. "I'm kind of excited." She's also fantasizing about getting away from her teen-proof house and getting a "pretty little glass table to put my pictures on."

And just maybe, she says, she'll finally find time to date.

Although she still hears that little voice from time to time -- "Don't leave me by myself!" -- Julie is enjoying seeing her daughters mature. "Everything they are doing is what they should be doing," she says. "I just want them to both be happy."

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