

FEATURED EDITOR'S PICK SPOTLIGHT

Hickory mom spent 10 years raising kids, pursuing degree. She graduates this Mother's Day weekend.

Billy Chapman May 10, 2025 0



Listen to this article now

Powered by Trinity Audio

00:00



05:05

Olga Elmore is a mother with two children. She has juggled raising her children, attending school and, for a time, managed a Waffle House.

"You know what they say," Elmore said. "If you can manage a Waffle House, you can do just about anything."

She took time off from school, gained life experiences and, on May 10, graduates with a business degree from Appalachian State in Hickory.



Olga Elmore stands in front of the App State Hickory campus on April 28. She graduates May 10 with a business degree.
Billy Chapman, Record

Elmore, 32, said achieving her degree has taken over 10 years.

"It doesn't matter what's going on in your life, just take the time to do what you need to," Elmore said. "This is what's important, furthering your future for you, your kids, your family and having that goal, like my goal has been for almost the past 10 years."

Elmore is a single mother, raising a 12-year-old and a 7-year-old.

People are also reading...

- 1 [Meet Newton-Conover brothers going to regionals and 5 more boys track & field athletes to know](#)
- 2 [Catawba, Burke counties free concerts this Friday will feature original country musicians](#)
- 3 [Maiden grad at UNC Greensboro wins college conference Softball Player of the Week](#)
- 4 [Meet a Bandys hurdler who burns rubber, and 4 more Catawba County girls track athletes to know](#)

She started her pursuit of higher education around 2012, taking classes at Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute. After a year of classes, Elmore decided the drive was too far and planned to transfer to Catawba Valley Community College.

Then she found out she was pregnant with her first child.

After a couple of years, she enrolled in CVCC. She worked at Waffle House and became a manager.

She applied to App State in Boone to study accounting.

Life had other plans once again.

"I was all signed up and everything," Elmore said. "Then I found out I was pregnant with my youngest."

She continued working at Waffle House and raising her kids. She completed an associate's degree in art from CVCC around 2020.



Olga Elmore, center, with her children Aiden, 7, and Andrew, 12. Elmore said her children have been her "biggest cheerleaders" as she worked, completed college and raised them.

Olga Elmore

In 2023, when App State's Hickory campus opened, she enrolled at the campus to pursue a degree in business. During her first year, she found out about the ANSWER Scholarship and Mentors for Mom program.

The program was founded in 2006 by Charlotte resident Susan Anderson. ANSWER, an acronym for Anderson Nontraditional Scholarship for Women's Education and Retraining, has awarded \$921,502 to 153 moms in the Charlotte metro area, according to the organization.

"We do everything to support our moms, and if they run into any roadblocks, we're there to support them," Mentors for Mom program director Martha Honeycutt said. "The biggest thing is to inspire them to be a role model of academic, personal and professional success for their kids."



Listen now and subscribe: [Apple Podcasts](#) | [Google Podcasts](#) | [Spotify](#) | [RSS Feed](#) | [SoundStack](#)

ANSWER Scholarship

The ANSWER Scholarship program is looking for mentors in the area. To learn more about the program and inquire about being a mentor, visit answerscholarship.org.

The scholarship provides mothers with tuition for college. Honeycutt said the program offers \$5,500 per year. It also offers mentors who provide guidance and support for the scholarship recipients, tutoring and other programs. Those selected have to attend college full time.

Honeycutt said the mothers in the program are inspirational to other moms and their children. She does not want people to think the Mentors for Mom program is about successful women taking advantage of other women to make themselves feel better.





Martha Honeycutt, left, stands with Olga Elmore outside the App State Hickory campus on April 28. Honeycutt is the Mentors for Mom program director for the ANSWER Scholarship.
Billy Chapman, Record

“Our moms are amazing, and they are doing it,” Honeycutt said. “We never want anybody to look at our moms and think, ‘Oh, wow, that’s too bad.’ We are rocking it.”

Elmore said the ANSWER Scholarship and other financial aid are helping her graduate from college debt free.

In addition to taking a full course load, Elmore works about 20 hours per week as a student employee. She coordinates tutors for students. She sometimes tutors students taking finance and business courses.

“I was the first student employee hired on this campus,” Elmore said. “My boss and I got together, ... and she gave me an entrepreneurial spirit to build the tutoring center up to what it needs to be.”

Elmore lives and was raised in Catawba County but was born in Russia.

At the age of four, she and a sister were adopted and came to the United States.

“It was very hard transitioning,” Elmore said. “You went from an orphanage where you didn’t have a lot to a family.”

Elmore credited her adoptive parents with helping her overcome difficulties she faced.

“I’m very blessed to have the parents that adopted me,” Elmore said. “They really gave me a structure that I definitely would never have had in Russia. To this day, they really push me and they’re really proud about the journey I’ve had.”



Olga Elmore, front row, fourth from right, and members of the 2024-2025 ANSWER Scholarship. The program helps mothers with financial personal assistance attend college full time.
Andrea Cooper, ANSWER Scholarship

She said the hardest part of attending school, taking care of her children and working has been learning time management skills.

Elmore said her children are proud of her, watching as she worked, helped them academically, took them to extracurriculars and studied for school.

“They’re like my little cheerleaders,” Elmore said.

Elmore said she hopes to work with the ANSWER Scholarship program in the future as a mentor. After graduating, she wants to continue working for App State in the admissions office.

She knows graduating is not the end of her journey and has more goals for her life and her family.

"It's all about perseverance," Elmore said. "You cannot let a simple thing get in the way. Even if you need to take a break and come back to it, I think once you set your mind to something, regardless of what happens in life, just persevere toward your goals."

Billy Chapman is a reporter with the Hickory Daily Record.

wchapman@hickoryrecord.com