



# REGINA RUTHERFORD

## B.S. BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION '15

Graduating from college is a milestone in anyone's life, but for Regina (Brannock) Rutherford, it also symbolized a destination, a full-circle transformation and a triumph.

Rutherford's college journey began in 1994 as a means of learning new skills and starting over. A young mother in a marriage marred by emotional abuse, addiction and infidelity, Rutherford was shot by her then-husband after a dispute. The gun was aimed at her hand – the one picking up the phone to call the police. Unable to fulfill her job obligations as a medical assistant due to her injury, she enrolled in Ventura College and started trying to envision a better life.

Subsequent years were difficult. Although she received legal and medical support, she struggled with self-esteem and issues involving her ex's contact with their child. Along the way, she dropped out of college, went through bankruptcy and experienced bouts of depression.

In 2006, a colleague helped her get an entry-level job at Kaiser Permanente. Within six months, Rutherford got promoted to a supervisory role.

The job offered much-needed financial security and stability, and, in 2013, she enrolled in CI, determined to finish her degree. It wasn't easy to work full time, attend school full time and be a single mom, but she persevered and finished with a 3.8 GPA.

"Graduation was exhilarating and surreal, and knowing my children and wonderful current husband were there to see me felt so satisfying," says Rutherford. "I often tell myself, if I did that, I can do anything! My oldest daughter completed her degree the following year."

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Today, Rutherford manages the group she joined at Kaiser 11 years ago, Administrative Services, and oversees 18 staff members. She's also started using her voice to advocate for others.

In April 2017, she relayed her story publicly for the first time, sharing the stage with Ventura County District Attorney Greg Totten at a victims' rights event. She's now active in [VOICES](#), which strives to create a "one-stop shop" Family Justice Center for Ventura County.

"I've made it to where I am today by perseverance and education, and I hope to inspire others who may doubt their abilities to carry on," says Rutherford. "One of the things I'm most passionate about is taking the stigma and shame away from being a 'victim.' I actually hate that word and don't use it to describe myself. I am a survivor."

*NOTE: As Rutherford looks around the CI campus and reflects on the site's transformation over decades past, she sees a deep connection between herself and the University. "I feel like the school shares my story of being reborn into something bigger and better," she says. "We'll always have that in common."*



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