Kristin took courses with Prof. Niece just before the accident, during her first semester back and this semester. “Since she came to Assumption, she had a clear idea of what she wanted to do and she’s been so focused on that,” said Niece. “When she came back after the accident she wasn’t processing things as well as she had prior, but having her in class now, she’s like she was before. I’ve been amazed by how little I’ve had to think about accommodating her. She almost always finds a way to do things herself. She’s one of a kind.”

deKlerk explains, “Kristin is driven and determined, which is probably what has made her amazing recovery possible. While she has faced cognitive changes, slower processing, difficulty finding words, she simply works through all of this. The cognitive improvements that have taken place are noticeable. Of course, a student majoring in science with one arm is physically daunting. However, with accommodations, working with a lab partner and absolute determination Kristin has done very well. When it comes to talking about her ‘disabilities’ she uses humor to break the tension. If she needs your help, she lets you know. She refuses to give up, feel bad for herself, or hold herself to a lower standard than before the accident.”

The traumatic brain injury also affected Kristin’s reading comprehension, walking balance and peripheral vision. “I’m really lucky,” said Kristin, “that if something had to happen to me, it happened when I was 20. My neurologist said that when she looks at my brain scan, she finds it hard to believe how much brain function I have.” Kristin has a scooter to help her navigate the campus and spent a year learning how to do nearly everything one-handed. “There are very few things I can’t do,” she said. Kristin also has a computerized myoelectric prosthetic arm with touch pads to operate it, which she admittedly doesn’t use often. “When I have to work in a lab there are things that I can’t do one-handed, so it will be very useful then, which is the main reason I need it.”

The crash may have taken her arm and some brain function, but it hasn’t removed her positive attitude and determination to succeed. In May she will graduate, a year later than intended but a much stronger person than she thought possible. Kristin plans to pursue a master’s degree in chemistry at either Northeastern, Tufts, or Boston University this fall. From there, she hopes to earn a Ph.D. and become a college professor. It seems that she has already started teaching others, by example. ✪

an extraordinary Eucharistic minister and lector and taught CCD. In 2001 a deacon candidate asked me if I had thought about becoming a deacon. Oddly enough, I had never seen a deacon in action but I said ‘yes!’ My wife asked me what duties a deacon performed and I said, ‘I don’t know but I’ll find out!’ He was ordained in October 2007.

As one of the more distinguished lodging options on the Vineyard, the staff at the Thorncroft makes it a point to interact and bond with its guests. Karl said, “We want to know why someone came to the island and how we can help them enjoy our marvelous seacoast environment. Running this business is somewhat like having a constant flow of family and friends come through our doors. It’s a rather extraordinary approach.” Thorncroft’s impressive physical plant is highlighted by feature-filled rooms, most of which have working fireplaces. Some have balconies, two-person whirlpools or private in-room hot tubs (a Vineyard inn exclusive). Thorncroft also touts its complimentary breakfast in bed, high speed internet access and a renowned concierge service. “We focus solely on romantic getaways for individual couples,” said Karl. “We don’t have rooms with multiple beds and we don’t own cots or rollaway beds. We have a very specific market niche and we don’t try to be all things to all people. Our business model is based on our couples orientation.”

Karl and Lynn have been married for 36 years and have two sons, Alex (23) and Hans (21). As an inn owner, his flexible schedule allowed Karl to coach baseball and football teams on which his sons played. Karl’s busy diaconal ministry schedule (including assisting at the Masses each weekend, teaching catechism classes, marriage and baptism preparation classes, prayer groups, religious committee memberships, etc.) will present some challenges to running a seven-days-a-week business, so for the first time, they closed the Inn for the winter while he sorts it out.

The Buders have many fond memories over nearly three decades of hosting visitors and creating friendships at the Thorncroft, but one stands out. Karl recalled, “A couple came to us about a dozen years ago with the specific intention to arrange their divorce settlement. They sat at breakfast for a couple of days with hostile expressions on their faces, furiously writing their divorce arrangements on yellow pads. It wasn’t pretty. By the time they left, they had reconciled and left arm in arm. That was heartwarming and we took it as a real pat-on-the-back.” Those satisfied customers would certainly indicate that a stay at Thorncroft Inn is truly worth the trip. ✪