There aren’t very many families with ties to UNC Wilmington who can keep up with the Joneses of Kenansville.

Since the early 1970s, 13 family members covering three generations have attended or graduated from UNCW.

Cora Jones, the eldest sister, was the first to brand herself as a Seahawk, graduating in 1974 with a bachelor’s degree in education. It was Cora who sparked younger brother Mike’s initial interest in UNCW. Although the university consisted of just three buildings, he developed a love for the campus while visiting his sister, one that inspired him to live on campus all four years he was enrolled.

“I enjoyed watching the campus evolve, knowing that this university was going places,” Mike said, who graduated in 1990 with a degree in finance.

He credited the time he spent at UNCW to advancing many things including his social skills. “I was able to meet people from different backgrounds, teaching me to understand people’s different points of view and diverse cultures,” he said.

When Mike graduated, the family turned out for the ceremony and was featured in the Wilmington Star-News. When asked what secret she had to getting her children to attend college, mother Sarah Jones said she exerted no extra pressure on them, but did let them know she wanted them to achieve more than she had.

“We were all fortunate to have the support of our mother Sarah Faison Jones, who raised us on a seamstress’s salary after our parents separated. She was truly the inspiration behind us all,” Mike said.

She can definitely be proud of Mike. He went on to earn an M.B.A. at Fayetteville State University and a J.D. from N.C. Central University, and he completed the executive education program at Harvard University. He is now the associate counsel on the corporate law team at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, practicing in the areas of employment law, nonprofit law, construction law and providing legal support and assistance to the diversity office at Blue Cross.

“I believe that the workforce today requires more interaction from people of diverse cultures, beliefs and backgrounds than ever before. The success of any business requires a diverse pool of talent that can bring new ideas, perspectives and views to the workplace,” he said.

Supporting diversity efforts is not the only place his voice can be heard.

A member of the UNCW gospel choir, Mike also has sung with the Boston Community Choir, the Boston Pops Gospel Choir and the New England Conservatory Millennium Choir. This gave him the opportunity to perform with some of the music industry’s top talents such as Mariah Carey, Jennifer Holiday, Richard Smallwood, Donald Lawrence, Marvin Winans and Willie Nelson. He even performed the National Anthem at a Boston Celtics game.

Mike urges students not to get discouraged if their first job after graduation is not the field they had chosen originally.

“Finding the career that you love and are passionate about is a process that takes time. So until you find the right path for you, enjoy the journey,” said Mike.

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– Mike Jones
Cora E. Jones ‘74 went on to earn three Master of Arts degrees from Fayetteville State University. She is a retired Pender County School administrator. Her daughter, Malaika N. Jones-Wright ‘95, is a community service coordinator for the N.C. Department of Community Corrections.

Thomasa Jones Hall Mathis ‘92 is a general math and Algebra I teacher at Eastern Wayne Middle School in Goldsboro. She also teaches pre-curriculum education of mathematics at Wayne Community College.

Tina E. Jones ’88 works as a site director for Neuse Enterprises/Omega in Wallace, an adult development and vocational training program.

Carol Jones Wilson (not pictured) attended UNCW from 1985-86 before transferring to UNC Chapel Hill and earning a B.A. in economics. She earned her J.D. in 1994 from North Carolina Central University. She is district court judge in the 4th Judicial District, which includes Duplin, Jones, Onslow and Sampson counties.

Stanley F. Jones ’99 earned an M.B.A. from Campbell University and is a project cost analyst at PPD in Wilmington. His wife, Erica Smith Jones ’96, is a project manager for PPD.

Daryl L. Jones ’93 is a sales management consultant for BB&T in Wilmington. He is pursuing a master’s degree in Christian education. His wife, Mary Louise Faison Jones ’93, is a recreation specialist with the City of Wilmington.

Glenda Wallace Collins ’94 is the service coordinator for Children’s Development Services in Greensboro.

Mike Jones graduated in 1990 with a degree in finance. He earned an M.B.A. at Fayetteville State University and a J.D. from N.C. Central University and completed the executive education program at Harvard University. He is now the associate counsel on the corporate law team at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.

Sarah Faison Jones is “the inspiration” behind the Jones’ family’s success.