Joy Branford ’05 inspired a room filled with students and staff at the annual Women’s Luncheon on March 24. As the guest speaker, Joy addressed the audience and shared her story of overcoming challenges to achieve her goals.

Originally from St. Lucia, a small island in the Caribbean, Joy just missed getting admitted to the University of the West Indies Open Campus, the only university on the island. Joy applied to international schools but financial limitations prevented her from going to college in England, where she’d been admitted.

Joy spoke of her dedication to obtaining an education. She credited her resilience with helping her to persevere against the challenges that came her way. Joy decided to move to New York, where her mother lived. She was accepted at Marymount Manhattan College. As she began taking classes, Joy found a job working in fashion management in Manhattan, the capital of the fashion industry.

While working in fashion management, Joy met a mentor—a man from Silicon Valley who graduated from Stanford University and owned his own business. He spoke highly of the Bay Area and offered Joy a place to stay while she got settled with a job and school. Joy arrived in San Francisco with $200 in her pocket and immediately began looking for a job and at schools.

Joy found a job in a clothing store and was admitted to Menlo College. Unfortunately, because not all of her credits would transfer to Menlo, Joy had to delay her start at Menlo by a year and take classes at Foothill College. Once at Menlo, financial pressures forced Joy to switch from the day program to take classes at night in the Professional Studies Program.

Joy acknowledged all the support she received from her Menlo professors, “If I was having a rough time with work, I could talk to my professors. They were so accessible.” She also credits Menlo with teaching her skills that were applicable to what she was doing in her job. “I worked hard and had the right attitude. No one gave me favors,” she commented. “You don’t need favors just because you’re a woman. Women can do their own work.”

This can-do attitude helped Joy to be successful at Menlo. She was on the Dean’s List each semester and graduated in 2005 with a major in Business Management and a minor in Human Resources. She went on to pursue her Masters in Human Resources and graduated with Honors from Golden Gate University in 2008.

Joy has been active in the Menlo College alumni community—in PSP reunions, networking events, the Alumni Association, and as an invited guest speaker. She expresses gratitude to the school and the professors who helped her find her way and acted as mentors. Speaking to a room filled with current Menlo students Joy advised them to “pay it forward.” Joy said, “When we’re given gifts, it’s important for us to give back.”