



The Medina triplets, from left, Aliyah, Evan and Zarrea, graduated from Central High School. They are now enrolled in Springfield Technical Community College.

SPRINGFIELD

3's no crowd STCC-ing together

You might say the three Medina siblings decided to "STCC" together when they chose a college.

The 18-year-old triplets from Springfield - two sisters and a brother - are enrolled at Springfield Technical Community College for fall classes. In the spring, Aliyah, Zarrea and Evan Medina graduated from Springfield Central High School.

Paying for one child's education can be difficult enough, but the triplets' parents, Daniel and Evelyn Medina, have to foot the cost of sending three at the same time.

Fortunately, STCC proved to be a most affordable higher education option in Springfield. Daniel Medina said his eldest daughter took classes at the college. He knew that STCC, the only technical community college in Massachusetts, has an excellent reputation in addition to being easy on his wallet.

"It makes financial sense for us to bring them here," Daniel Medina said. "They can start here and transfer to a four-year college or university."

College president John B. Cook

said he welcomes the Medina triplets, who will be part of a diverse student body.

"I look forward to seeing them on campus," Cook said. "They made a smart move by choosing STCC. In some cases, the cost of sending three children to STCC is the same or less than sending one child to a four-year college or university. They also will have an opportunity to explore unique pathways to key fields including health care, computer science, engineering and graphic arts."

Professors and classmates may have trouble telling sisters Aliyah and Zarrea apart. They like to dress similarly and choose to wear similar

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eyeglass frames. They both part their sandy blond hair on the left and leave it cut so it falls to the same length.

The sisters say people kid them about pranks they could play at school. She wouldn't dream of doing it, but Aliyah said, "We get asked all the time, 'Are you going to switch classes and trick the teacher to see if they notice?'"

While the sisters might have people seeing double, no one will mistake their brother for them. Aliyah and Zarrea have a lighter skin complexion than Evan, who keeps his dark hair and beard cropped short. He resembles his father, whose family comes from Puerto Rico.

"When people meet me and Zarrea, they know we're identical, but when I tell them about my brother they say, 'That's your brother? He looks so different.' They can't even fathom that he's related to us," Aliyah said.

As triplets, the Medinas are a combination of identical and fraternal, which is rare. Most triplets are fraternal, or what is known as "trizygotic," meaning that each individual is created from a separate egg and sperm combination, according to VeryWell Family. The rarest type of triplet is when all three are identical.

The sisters are essentially identical twins, sharing the same general DNA characteristics. Evan, as the fraternal triplet, was produced by a different egg and sperm combination, which means he has a unique genetic makeup.

Evan said he's proud to be a triplet, even if some people don't think he's related to his sisters. The Medinas are the only triplets enrolled at STCC.

"It's unique. I don't know any triplets except for us," Evan said. "It's like we're little celebrities in school."

Daniel and Evelyn Medina decided they wanted another baby when their eldest daughter, Briana, was 10

years old. "We wanted one more kid. We just wanted two, but the man upstairs had different plans," he said.

Daniel Medina remembers how he felt when he learned triplets were on the way.

"We were in shock," he said. "Who wouldn't be in shock?"

Three-quarter of all triplets are born as a result of fertility treatments, but that wasn't the case with the Medina triplets. They were conceived naturally. The odds of being born that way are about 1 in 8,100, according to VeryWell Family.

Carrying triplets is risky, so the doctor ordered several months of bed rest for Evelyn Medina. Because it was too dangerous to go to

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Zarrea Medina

full term, the birth of the triplets was induced early. The girls weighed a little over 2 pounds at birth. Evan was about 3 pounds. They spent their first few days in the neonatal intensive care unit at Baystate Children's Hospital.

Fast-forward 18 years, and the triplets - healthy and bright - are ready to make their mark on STCC. Zarrea is interested in studying computer programming. Evan and Aliyah are still trying to figure out what they want to do, so they have enrolled in the general studies program.

The triplets all said they see enrolling at STCC, which has over 90 programs, as an affordable pathway to a career and a chance to meet new people and learn to become independent.

"Hopefully, STCC will give us the tools we need to reach our career goals," Zarrea said. "We are ready to take the first step to our future."