

CHAZ & STEPHANIE
TURTLE MOUNTAIN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



 **BELCOURT, ND**
The HEART Project

Just the Two of Us

Chaz and Stephanie are the definition of a power couple. Motivated to provide for their growing family, they took a chance towards a new career by applying for the HEART Project, Turtle Mountain Community College's (TMCC) Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG) program. With the HEART Project's assistance, they both obtained certification as Phlebotomy Technicians and associate degrees in Medical Laboratory Science.

Chaz and Stephanie's story began in 2006. Their college plans changed when Stephanie became pregnant with their first child. Due to new priorities, they made the hard decision to leave school and find work.

Eventually, Chaz and Stephanie were ready to further their education. They enrolled into TMCC's Project CHOICE program where they obtained certification as Nursing Assistants and began working as traveling nurses earning \$19 an hour. They struggled being away from their family and desperately sought security and stability.

In 2017, Chaz and Stephanie met the Director of the Phlebotomy Program at TMCC who told them about the HEART Project and encouraged them to apply. They were thrilled to envision a future without the financial struggles and immediately applied to the program. With five children at home, the journey was

hard. At times they wanted to quit, but support from the TMCC staff encouraged them to stay in school and achieve their goals. Chaz and Stephanie both received supportive services including, academic advising, mentoring, training-related costs assistance, tutoring, transportation assistance, and help with childcare. "The staff from the HEART and CHOICE programs really took care of us and made us feel like part of the family," they said. In May 2018, Chaz and Stephanie received certificates as Phlebotomy Technicians but they did not stop there. Wanting to continue their education, they both enrolled in the Medical Laboratory Technician program, finishing in December 2019.

After completing both programs, Chaz and Stephanie moved to Bismarck, ND where they got jobs as lab technicians with the Division of Microbiology at the North Dakota Department of Health. They are both working full time and earning \$27 per hour.

"Turtle Mountain Community College was completely life changing!" says Chaz and Stephanie. "This experience has given us confidence which we will use to continue our education within our field of healthcare."

This success story was self-identified by the grantee and information contained in this document was provided by the grantee.