



Raquel
Central Community College
Project Help

The good life.

It's the unofficial state motto of Nebraska that adorns road signs and greets travelers as they pass by the fields of wild grass and perfect rows of corn that fill the state. For those who come to the nation's heartland looking for something better, "The Good Life" is not so much a welcome or a promise as it is a question; a riddle whose answer lies somewhere between aspiration and reality.

For Raquel Renteria, the road to the good life in her adopted state started with a healthcare training program funded by HPOG through the Office of Family Assistance.

When Raquel arrived in Central Nebraska in the fall of 2015, she was a long way from home and a long way from finding her good life. Raquel had come from the city of Compton, just south of downtown Los Angeles. The 17-year-old had fled the grinding poverty and the violence of the city with her older sister and her sister's fiancé. In Grand Island, Nebraska, Raquel was far from any ocean, but she found herself adrift with no natural connections to her surroundings and no solid plans for her future.

The troubles for Raquel mounted until she found herself homeless and struggling to finish high school. Raquel was able to find shelter and help through a transitional living program called Maryland Living Center (MLC). MLC recognized Raquel's needs and assigned her a case manager who was able to help her graduate school. Recognizing the next stage of her life was about to begin, Raquel focused on the daunting task of finding a good job. After her case manager told her about Project HELP, Raquel knew she had found the right guide to help navigate the road to a sustainable career.

Project HELP is a healthcare job training program at Grand Island, Nebraska's Central Community College, which was established and is funded by HPOG. A Project HELP success coach enrolled Raquel in the program and on a course of instruction that culminated with Raquel completing a Nursing

Training program and acing her state exam. After submitting several job applications, opportunity quickly came knocking in the form of a job interview at a nearby assisted living home. Using some of the soft skills learned from her Project HELP training, Raquel prepared for the interview with her success coach. Preparation and opportunity make for a powerful combination and Raquel was offered a job based on the strength of her interview and her academic and training background. Raquel is now in a full-time position, earning \$12 an hour. Success hasn't come easy – Raquel has to bike to work nearly 8 miles, five days a week – but her grit and determination have not only set her on a sustainable career path, but also inspired her to pursue continuing education courses that could ultimately lead to higher wages and more responsibility at work.

Raquel's climb up the ladder of success is still in progress; but thanks to Project HELP, she received the support, education, and training she needed to reach the first rung.