



# Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Compendium of Success Stories

November 2012



ADMINISTRATION FOR

**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**







## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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**ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**  
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20447

November 6, 2012

Too many low-income Americans live without hope of ever finding a good paying job, a job that can move them off of public assistance, enable them to support their families, and help them accomplish their dreams. At the same time, many health care employers struggle to find qualified staff with the level of training and technical expertise required to provide the high quality of care their patients need. This occurs because many would-be employees lack the necessary skills to fill those positions.

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program was created as part of the Affordable Care Act to address these challenges. It provides education and training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals for occupations in the health care field that pay well and are in high demand. It's a win for all stakeholders. It is responsive to community workforce needs and improves job prospects for adults in low-income families, matching careers in a growing field with people who are eager to fill them.

This collection of success stories describes how 32 HPOG participants, one from each grantee, have progressed in a healthcare career pathway. They are a diverse group of people. They are men and women. They include individuals who speak English as a second language, single-mothers, tribal members, veterans and many others. They come from across the country, from places like Anchorage, Alaska; Grand Island, Nebraska; and Pensacola, Florida. They face challenges like unemployment, financial stress, personal medical issues, and caring for dependent family members. They are completing a variety of training programs including those for occupations in nursing, health information, and laboratory technology.

In as many ways as they are different they also share many qualities. They are determined, resilient and possess a strong work ethic.

I encourage you to read these stories to see the progress being made. These stories point to the ways that HPOG is making a difference in the lives of individuals by offering hope and an opportunity for a better future, and are an inspiration to all of us.

Please join me in celebrating their success.

Sincerely,

/s/

Earl Johnson  
Director  
Office of Family Assistance



## Introduction

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**A**uthorized by the Affordable Care Act, the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program is providing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals with education and training for healthcare occupations that pay well and are in high demand. The HPOG program is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance.

First awarded in September 2010, the grantees are now entering the third year of a five year program. HPOG awards were made to 32 entities located across 23 states, including four State bodies, nine local Workforce Investment Boards (three of whom are also Workforce Investment Act One-Stop operators), 12 institutions of higher education (consisting of one university, nine community colleges and two community college districts), and two community based organizations. Five awards were given to tribal applicants, including one tribal council and four tribal colleges.

The HPOG program serves a diverse array of program participants from across the country. There have been particularly strong efforts to serve the most at risk populations, and to assist them in overcoming the barriers they face to obtaining meaningful employment. As of September 2012, over 10,000 participants have enrolled in healthcare occupational training through HPOG.

This *Compendium of Success Stories* captures some of the inspiring journeys of real program participants, and shows the kind of transformation that is possible through HPOG. The stories included were identified by the grantees themselves, with full consent from the individual participants to use their names and stories. These accounts give a glimpse of what lies behind the numbers of participants “enrolled”, “completed” and “employed”. They are real people overcoming real challenges.

The HPOG program is a demonstration project designed to build and share knowledge. There is a lot to learn from the *Success Stories* captured here but this is just one component of a broad strategy to build and share knowledge. A multi-pronged evaluation is also underway that will provide much more information on program implementation, systems change, outcomes and impact. The evaluation will grow the evidence base for improving outcomes for TANF recipients and other low-income individuals.

These *Success Stories* were collected by the Office of Family Assistance’s technical assistance provider, JBS International, Inc. There is one success story for each of the 32 grantees. This volume organizes the *Success Stories* by grantee, State, and occupation. To access this document and other related information electronically, please go to the HPOG Community Website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/hpog>.



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# Success Stories

## Stanley at Alamo Community College District Healthcare Professions Training Initiative

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**S**tanley Redus was recruited from the Haven for Hope, which is one of San Antonio's homeless shelters. He had encountered some life difficulties, a little later in life, which had left him homeless and with no other option but to resort to temporary assistance at the shelter. Alamo Colleges had been sharing the HPOG training program opportunities with residents and managers throughout the year during on-site information sessions and through the posting of flyers. While assisting with services at the shelter one day, Stanley got hold of one of those flyers, one about the upcoming Material Management and Central Supply training program.

Although he did not attend any of the information sessions or encounter a representative at the shelter, he became interested in this training and wanted to know more. Stanley called the Workforce Center and was directed to the Alamo Colleges HPOG intake specialist located at the Westside Education and Training Center. His call was within days of the start of a session, and through responsive support, he was enrolled.

Once training started, Stanley became a model student. He had perfect attendance, scored well on all of his testing, and carried a positive attitude. He was able to maintain his perfect attendance at the job site, University Healthcare Systems (UHS), during the full period of his time limited employment training. Equally impressive, he was able to prove to this employer that he had obtained the needed skills and abilities to join the employer's team immediately.

Stanley so impressed this employer, that he was extended an offer for employment in advance of his training completion, a little over two weeks into his four-week job training period. He was hired on June 25, 2012, at UHS, working with the materials management team at a starting salary of \$12.30 per hour, exceeding the San Antonio region's starting pay projections for this occupational area.

Stan's story is very motivating, is a testament to the HPOG program and opportunities that it offers to individuals just like Stanley. His success is often cited as an example for those considering enrollment in the program.

# Success Stories

## Stephanie at Bergen Community College

### Northern New Jersey Health Professions Consortium

**S**tephanie Davila was referred to Warren County Community College (WCCC) by the County Division of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Stephanie's heritage is Hispanic. At the time she began the program, Stephanie was an unemployed, 22-year-old, single mother, with three children, the youngest being 2 years old. Stephanie and her family were receiving cash assistance from TANF as well as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Stephanie had some prior work experience as a house cleaner and personal caregiver, but her work record was interrupted because of family issues.

Stephanie enrolled in WCCC's Certified Nursing Assistant Program and worked diligently throughout the course. The HPOG program provided case management, books, mentoring, academic counseling, uniforms, and support. She completed the program and passed her State Certification. She is now gainfully employed at a long-term care facility very close to her home.

Stephanie reports that she is enjoying her new position and is excited about the prospects of improving her life. She feels that she is on the path to self-sufficiency.

# Success Stories

## Maeghan Rides At The Door at Blackfeet Community College Issksiniip Project

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I have not always known exactly what I wanted to do for a career but I've always known I would be in a helping profession. Upon graduating with my Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from the University of Montana, I worked three jobs (two at a local mental health center and one at a youth shelter) to support myself and pay off the student loan debt that I had accumulated. I struggled to be on my own for the first time in the so-called "real world" of responsibilities, but during this year I also had the most rewarding experiences of my life. Providing supportive conversation to populations of adults with severe disabling mental illness and adolescents was very fulfilling, and although I didn't always know what to say, I learned that being a good listener was just as important. My desire to professionally counsel people led me to pursue a graduate degree in mental health counseling.

I was beginning my third year of the counselor education program when I first learned of the Issksiniip Project. Although students generally finish the counselor education degree within two years, I had taken the slower track to fulfill my responsibilities of being a partner and a new mother. At this point, I was struggling to finance my education and didn't know how I was going to find the funds to finish my degree. I was in the process of appealing to receive financial aid, and I wasn't eligible to receive assistance from my tribe since they only fund two years of graduate school. I was worried because I had accepted a year-long internship at the campus counseling center, and I wasn't sure how I was going to attend school, do my internship, work a part-time job, and pay for childcare all at the same time. I was afraid I would not be eligible to apply for the Health Professions Opportunity Grant program since there are limited scholarship opportunities to aid mental health counseling students. However, I was ecstatic to learn I was eligible to apply, and to this day I do not know how I would have funded my last year of education without this opportunity. Because of this scholarship I was able to finish my education and gain relevant experience toward my goal of becoming a professional Counselor.

I am proud to say I am now working as a Career Counselor at the same institution where I received my education. I love being able to help students find career paths and become competitive candidates in their fields. I am still in the process of gaining hours toward being applying to become a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, but I am much closer to achieving this goal as a result of this program. I am thankful to be in a position where I can let other students know about the HPOG program.

# Success Stories

## Lindsay at Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium, Inc.

### Health Professions Collaborative

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Lindsay is a 23-year-old single mother with a 10-month-old baby. Over the past five years, she had been receiving social service benefits while working part time as a waitress. That all began to change in September 2011. Lindsay started out by visiting Erie 1 BOCES to find out about phlebotomy training. She was disappointed to learn training did not begin until February 2012, but she received information about medical office and medical billing programs.

Still interested in pursuing a health care occupation, Lindsay visited the Buffalo Employment and Training Center next. There she impressed the staff with her wonderful personality and commitment to finding a good career. Testing allowed her to demonstrate her strong typing skills, which led to a referral to medical billing training. The availability and timing of that training was much better.

She started medical billing training in October and finished the following February. Two weeks after completing training, she was hired at Buffalo MRI as a Medical Biller at \$13.00 per hour.

Lindsay enjoyed her training and loves her work, and her employer loves her right back. In October 2012, she will begin a certification course, which will lead to an increase in pay. She is proud that, as a result of her HPOG experience, she is now able to support herself and her son without social service benefits. She stated that HPOG changed her life. Her long-term goal is to continue her education to become an RN.

# Success Stories

## Robin L. Fox at Cankdeska Cikana Community College

### Next Steps Program

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**T**his is the story of Robin L. Fox. Robin is a Native American woman and an enrolled member of Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold, North Dakota. Robin had a dream of attending college and becoming a nurse. In 2004, Robin met Deb Wilson, the director of the University of North Dakota (UND) Recruitment and Retention of American Indians into Nursing (RAIN) program at a college career fair at Fort Berthold Community College (FBCC) in New Town. The RAIN program is a major subcontractor and service provider for the Next Steps Project. Deb Wilson encouraged Robin to pursue her dreams of becoming a nurse. She offered Robin kind words, information on available services, and a path to pursue.

Like many of her peers, Robin did not follow her dreams as a teen. Due to overwhelming circumstances, she felt her goals were unachievable. Robin was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and had a wonderful life until the loss of her mother. While her mother was still living, she encouraged Robin to apply for the RAIN program. She gave her daughter a RAIN pamphlet she found at the Seattle Indian Health Board office. After the loss of her mother, Robin lived from place to place before becoming homeless. She spent a good part of her life on the streets of Seattle, living out of a backpack. Despite these difficult circumstances, Robin never lost sight of her dream of becoming a nurse. Robin held on to that RAIN pamphlet and carried that information with her on the streets of Seattle. When the pamphlet became damaged or too difficult to read, she would go to the Indian Center in Seattle to pick up a new one.

Robin met her husband, David Merkley, in 2004 and moved to North Dakota. She brought along that pamphlet with the information on becoming a nurse. She enrolled in the nursing program at FBCC under the Next Steps program. Next, she obtained her License Practical Nursing (LPN) certificate and passed the State boards in 2006. In 2011, she was encouraged by RAIN Mentor Melinda Balderas to pursue her path to becoming a registered nurse (RN). Robin successfully applied to the Dakota Nursing Program at FBCC, and graduated with her Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in nursing. After passing the RN State boards, she became an RN in 2012!

Robin continues in her nursing education today. Throughout the support and guidance of Liz Yellowbird, her Next Steps Program Mentor, she has entered the RN-BSN distance program at UND. Robin is happily married with five beautiful daughters and is currently residing in Parshall, North Dakota. Upon completion of her advanced nursing degree, she plans to work providing healthcare services in the scope of her practice on the Fort Berthold Reservation. Robin is very appreciative of the Next Steps Program and those early words of encouragement and support that Deb Wilson offered her so many years ago.

# Success Stories

## Ysenia at Central Community College

### Health Education Laddering Program (Project HELP)

**Y**senia, a Nursing Assistant student, was a second-language student who was a single parent with no consistent income. The Nursing Assistant trainer had noticed that she had not been coming to lab and was failing the quizzes and called her to see why. Ysenia shared that she was very sad and frustrated with her childcare situation and unable to attend and concentrate. Having discussed the situation with Ysenia and understanding some of the dynamics that were causing problems for her, the CNA trainer referred her to a case manager. The case manager met with Ysenia and discussed the situation.

Ysenia explained that her parents, whom she lived with and who were providing daycare for her son, felt she was spending too much time studying and not enough time with her son. The pressure and negativity she was feeling from her family resulted in guilt and distraction from the training. The case manager encouraged her to discuss her dilemma with her parents and to ask them what schedule they felt was appropriate and what they were willing to help with. The following week, together, they created a schedule that worked with her family situation. At first Ysenia was very hesitant to share information with the case manager regarding her financial and home situation, but after establishing rapport with the case manager, Ysenia felt more comfortable and enrolled in Project HELP, the HPOG program.

The case manager discussed Ysenia's need for educational support with both the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) and Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) specialists. The VESL specialist administered the TABE reading assessment and determined that her English and reading skills were sufficient to understand the course material, but that she also qualified for the tutoring services. The I-BEST specialist assessed Ysenia's TABE scores and situation and determined that she could benefit from tutoring support for course work and skill review, now that her distractions had been resolved. The I-BEST specialist arranged for scheduled tutoring that worked with the student's schedule. Ysenia also checked out a Spanish/English medical dictionary from Project HELP study supplies. Using the supportive services of case management, tutoring, and study materials from Project HELP, this student passed the course training and the state certification test. She was absolutely thrilled!

Upon obtaining the approved status with the Nebraska State Registry for Certified Nursing Assistants and completing Project HELP interviewing skills training, Ysenia was offered employment as a CNA with a long-term care facility in her home town. She had entered into health education because she loved to care for the elderly and she wanted to help people, and now she is very happy to have the CNA job. She works hard to be very kind and caring to the residents.

Because of the respectful communication she held with her parents and the delicate balance she maintained between her education and parenting, Ysenia gained her parents' trust and respect. Now they are supportive of her future educational goals. She is connected with Central Nebraska Community Services, a Project HELP community partner, regarding her son's education, and she is working with the Bridge program at the local library to continue to develop her English skills. She also has enrolled in Central Community College's Registered Nursing Program and an entry-level math course there. She continues to work as a CNA to maintain the certification and skills.

# Success Stories

## Kim at Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) Work Attributes Toward Careers in Health (WATCH)

**"M**y name is Kim Campbell. I graduated from high school when I was eight months pregnant. My parents divorced when I was six months old. My mother was a drug addict and an alcoholic. Even though my mother had five children (with different fathers), she did not have custody of any of her children. I lived with my father and my paternal grandparents until I was 14 years old. I was very close with my grandmother and she became my 'mom.' At 14, I moved with my father, my stepmother, and her daughters to another home, away from my grandparents' house.

"When I was 18 years old, I decided to move back to my grandparents' home. After living there one month, I found out that I was pregnant and enrolled in the CSIU's Project ELECT, a teen parenting program. Kim Eroh from ELECT was a big help to me during that time. One month before my daughter was born, my fiancée and I moved into our own apartment through a referral from the Nurse Family Partnership. My Nurse Family Partnership nurse, Donna, told me about some job opportunities at Bloomsburg Hospital. While interviewing for a job, I was told about another position in a doctor's office as a file clerk. I was hired for a position with Dr. Kathy Baylor who suggested that a CNA [certified nursing assistant] license would be helpful in the office. My mentor Kim Eroh suggested the WATCH program to me and said it could help me with CNA classes.

"I contacted WATCH in July 2011 and began taking CNA classes the next month through Harrisburg Area Community College at The Emmanuel Center in Danville. I graduated in September 2011 and passed my exam in November to become a certified nursing assistant!

"I started my full-time job as a CNA at Geisinger Medical Center in January 2012. I work with patients who have had head injuries and also with patients who are recovering from surgery. Now I have a stable, better paying job where I can give my family what we need. And at Geisinger, there are more opportunities to make my pay even better." [Kim married her fiancé of four years in June 2012].

# Success Stories

## Sharon at College of Menominee Nation Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG) Nursing Career Ladder Program

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**S**haron wanted to go to nursing school. After some research she found that College of Menominee Nation was the place for her. A receptionist in the nursing department asked Sharon if she knew about the HPOG grants. She did not, but shortly after applying she was accepted into the grant. After a few visits to get started (assessments, intake, and development of a success plan), she was sure it was the place for her. She stated she was treated like a person and not a number.

“People understand my situation, and sometimes the understanding and listening makes all the difference for me. I live in Gillet, work in Green Bay, have children, and go to college. It is stressful. I am placed in experiences at the college with others in the same situation; they understand all the demands of me.... Some weight has been taken off me knowing that my tuition is paid, which will further progress my educational aspirations post-RN nursing. I can work as a nurse and adequately support my family while I slowly acquire my BSN. Currently, I am and have been a CNA for eight years now.”

HPOG has a program in place where students and applicants are evaluated for nursing readiness, and Sharon is almost ready to enter the nursing program. She has identified math proficiency as the number one goal and reading as a secondary goal as she works on getting herself academically ready. She has also received tuition and gas assistance. Sharon knows she has her HPOG support services coordinator to problem solve with her if she should ever have a barrier to attending school and performing well. She states she is more confident about her success now and is more likely to follow through with the program because some fears have been lifted.

# Success Stories

## Cortney at Community Action Project of Tulsa County, Inc.

### CareerAdvance®

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Cortney is a sweet and peppy young woman who works hard to achieve her goals. As a single mom to four-year-old Jaiden, she knows the importance of an education that allows her to obtain employment with a life-sustaining wage to improve her daughter's future. When Cortney saw the CareerAdvance® flyer in Jaiden's Head Start center and attended an information session, she knew that CareerAdvance® would give her this educational opportunity.

Cortney applied to CareerAdvance® and was accepted as part of its Health Information Technology Track. The track would allow her to meet her goal of working in a physician's office or hospital by becoming a Medical Assistant, then a Medical Coder, and then a Health Information Technologist. This situation seemed perfect because she had been searching for the right opportunity to go to college. CareerAdvance® training fit with her daughter's school schedule and also helped with childcare expenses when classes or clinical days were required outside of Jaiden's regular school hours.

Soon after she began her CareerAdvance® classes at Tulsa Technology Center, Cortney began to have a series of medical issues. When she first discussed the health situation with her career coach, she was nervous and discouraged because she thought she would be unable to continue with the CareerAdvance® program. After several discussions, she was relieved to know that the CareerAdvance® staff would work with her through these concerns.

Scheduling surgeries over the school break gave her opportunity to rest at home. Cortney was at her weekly partner meeting the Monday morning following spring break. She was in quite a bit of pain and could barely walk, but she was determined not to miss any classes or meetings. After her full recovery, she was back into the swing of her regular routine. Cortney completed the Medical Assisting program in July 2012 with a 3.90 grade point average. She successfully passed the Registered Medical Assistant and Phlebotomy exam in August 2012.

Currently, Cortney is pregnant with a baby girl due in December of 2012. Her initial goal was to work as a Medical Assistant, but since she has had additional medical issues, her doctor has recommended that she postpone working until after the baby is born. She plans to work then and to continue her next educational step, medical coding, in August 2013.

This past year has been very challenging for Cortney. There have been several times that she has thought about giving up, but through all her strife and struggles she remains positive and driven to complete her education, not only for herself but also for her two daughters. This mom's story is an inspiration to everyone who is working toward a better life.

# Success Stories

## Ms. CBL at Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.

### CITC Health Profession Opportunity Program

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**G**rowing up in Alaska's biggest city of Anchorage where there are well over 100 ethnic groups means it can be a challenge for many people of Alaska Native descent to fit into modern American culture while learning the Native traditions of the past. Imagine the struggle for a person who identifies herself as Siberian Yup'ik and African American who has never stepped foot into the village of her ancestors, yet is expected to have an innate understanding of what it means to be Yup'ik.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. (CITC) would like to showcase a woman who has been successful in embracing the Alaska Native traditional value of caring for Our People by working on earning a degree in the field of Nursing.

Ms. CBL's story began when she found herself at CITC wanting to earn a high school degree in a setting where she could celebrate her diversity without fear of retribution—something that was a daily struggle when she was in a regular school. She was tired of fighting with other students and being picked on because of her ethnicity. At CITC, she was able to earn her high school degree and then was introduced to the field of health care. Her Employment Specialist enrolled her in the Personal Care Attendant (PCA) training program.

After being a PCA and finding her calling in life, Ms. CBL wanted to continue to help people so she applied for the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training offered by the HPOG program. She successfully completed the training course and passed the Alaska State Board of Nursing licensing exam within three months and quickly found a CNA job working with Alaska's Elders.

CITC's HPOG program's career ladder in the Nursing field allowed Ms. CBL to enroll at the University of Alaska Anchorage and take classes while working full time as a CNA. She has weekly contact with the HPOG coordinator and relies on the support she receives from CITC to ensure she continues to succeed as a college student who is taking prerequisite courses for Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) training. Ms. CBL plans to work as an LPN and transition into the Registered Nurse (RN) training program.

Ms. CBL comes to our agency to find the additional support she needs to succeed as an HPOG student, a mother of two young girls, a CNA, a military wife whose husband is currently deployed, and a college student. CITC is lucky to have Ms. CBL in the HPOG program because she has embraced the natural leadership role of Mentor for new students who are just beginning the health career ladder process. This is an innate skill she has embraced as a Siberian Yup'ik woman living in today's society where the traditional values of family grow stronger with each life she involves herself in.

Quyanagg' piit-Ili. (Thank you very much).

# Success Stories

## Alexa at District Board of Trustees of Pensacola State College

### Health Professions Opportunity Grant

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A huge thank you to the entire HPOG team! I was privileged to be selected and qualify for this grant my last semester as an ultrasound student. HPOG allowed me to not have to work as many late night shifts at my job while in school and attending clinics five days a week. It enabled me to focus more on school and on my profession and less on whether or not I needed to pick up a shift at work. As a mother of one, full-time student, and full-time employee, I found the stresses of everyday life took a toll and hindered me from always performing to my full potential. However, with the opportunities made available by HPOG, everyday stresses were dramatically lessened.

The major assistance I received was for childcare coverage. My son's school welcomed the grant to its facility, thus enabling me to receive almost complete coverage for monthly daycare. This in turn allowed me to take off from work and to be home with my son after a long week in school. In addition, the gas cards enabled me to drive the hour and a half to my clinical sites as well as school. I am incredibly thankful to have been selected for this grant. I actively speak to coworkers and students, explaining how much help I received to achieve my goals. I can say without a doubt that HPOG helped me to get where I am today.

In my field of sonography, I am required to pass multiple registries in order to work. HPOG covered every expense needed to become registered. If I did not have the funds to pay for testing, I would not have been accepted as an applicant for my current job. An HPOG workshop helped me to put together a well-written résumé. My registries and résumé together enabled me to be chosen as a candidate for hire. I am now a full-time employee at a local hospital. I work 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and I am required to take call. I was allotted \$1,500 in relocation pay to help with my moving expenses, and I am now receiving all the benefits of a full-time employee. Within my 120 days post-graduation, HPOG facilitated funds that allowed me to take and pass a third registry, and because of that I was awarded a \$1.50 per hour raise.

I cannot say enough about the grant and how it helped to pave the way for my future. The staff was always welcoming and made sure that I had every single tool necessary to succeed. A huge thank you to Ami and Tracie, who were by my side checking on me, and a huge thank you to the entire HPOG staff! They really have helped to change the lives of many students. I can only hope that this grant will continue to improve the lives of other students and to improve the fantastic college from which I am proud to say I earned my degree.

# Success Stories

## Lynette at Eastern Gateway Community College Project HOPE

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**L**ynette McGhee is a determined, inspiring 43-year-old African American woman and mother of four children between the ages of 12 and 18. Lynette is a hard-working, dedicated student who, in the middle of the school year, found herself financially struggling after her mother had a severe stroke. Her mother needed long-term care and entered a nursing home. Lynette became financially responsible for her mother's care. She realized that things were about to take a turn for the worse, but she was determined to continue with her education.

Lynette became involved in Project Hope through an active advertising recruitment campaign. At that time, she was considering returning to school but did not think it was possible until she called and spoke with a friendly, encouraging recruiter. She enrolled in the Healthcare Information Medical Office Management program at the Mahoning County Career and Technical Center in Canfield, Ohio. She was immediately connected with a Student Coach who quickly became a mentor and friend.

When Lynette found herself in a financial and emotional crisis, her first instinct was to talk to her Student Coach. She struggled with making payments on her car, rent, and managing school and her family while trying to ensure that her mother had the medical care she desperately required. She depleted all of her resources and borrowed against her car for her mother's care. Lynette was unable to work and had cut her expenses to the bare bones, including terminating her phone service, but it was not enough. She was in danger of losing her home and car, which might require her to drop out of training and crush her dreams of becoming financially self-sufficient.

Lynette was not accustomed to asking for help, so instead she decided to write a letter. She wrote a powerful letter to her Student Coach only asking for the minimum amount to avoid eviction. Lynette's thoughts were filled with anxiety about how to keep a roof over her family's heads, continue with school, take care of her four children, and now manage the care of her mother.

Project Hope was able to support Lynette with a one-time payment for her rent totaling \$416.64. Although the amount seems small, Lynette knew in her heart she had nowhere else to turn for help. With the funding from HPOG and the support from Project Hope, Lynette avoided eviction and finished training.

Lynette is currently working in the healthcare field in medical records and is continuing to take classes to become a nurse. Her relationship with her Student Coach paved the way for the necessary support needed to keep Lynette and her family in their home during a time of family crisis.

She sent a thank you card to her Student Coach with the following greeting: "Please share this thank you with everyone at Project Hope for keeping me and my family in our home. GOD BLESS YOU ALL."

Lynette continues her relationship with her Student Coach through social media and is happy and proud of her accomplishments and her future in healthcare.

# Success Stories

## Helen at Edmonds Community College

### CATCH (Creating Access to Careers in Healthcare) Program

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**H**elen Myers, 48, had served in the military for three years. While in high school, she joined the National Guard as a medical supplies specialist and was initially deployed as part of a medical emergency (MASH) unit during the Mt. St. Helen's eruption. Due to pregnancy, she was granted a humanitarian, honorable discharge. She worked odd jobs in the restaurant and tele-marketing industries while raising her children, who are now grown and on their own.

After losing a job, through no fault of her own, she became jobless in rural Snohomish County, Washington. Determined to move forward, she would wake early each weekday and exit the tent she lived in to catch a 6:00 a.m. bus to the WorkSource Center in Everett. She was driven to find work since she knew that a job could lead to an apartment and a better life.

WorkSource is Washington state's joint venture to address employment needs; partners include Department of Social and Health Services/TANF, Workforce Investment Boards, and community colleges. At the WorkSource Center, Helen would sit in front of a computer screen, feeling overwhelmed, and fumble for an on-off switch, realizing that her typing skills had atrophied while she was under- and unemployed. Sensing her job search frustration and strong desire for new skills, a WorkSource veterans' representative referred her to the HPOG-CATCH Program at Everett Community College.

The CATCH Program helped Helen become computer literate. Using a learning model balanced with online and on-ground instruction, CATCH students receive a laptop computer to keep along with wraparound tech support to promote digital literacy while reducing common barriers to training. With patient, consistent support from the CATCH College Success instructor, Helen gradually gained confidence as she painstakingly learned the steps to operate the classroom's computers to access the online learning platform. She would use the Everett Community College library to complete online and on-ground assignments.

With advocacy and guidance from the CATCH navigation team, Helen received Commissioner Approved Training Benefits, allowing her to collect regular unemployment insurance benefits while attending the full-time CATCH Program. She moved into an apartment and passed the Washington State Nursing Assistant credentialing exam while completing Everett Community College's Nursing Assistant Certified (NAC) program. Helen described her HPOG-funded NAC training as humbling, but rewarding. On the first day of her NAC externship at a local long-term care facility, residents contracted a stomach flu, resulting in cleanup after cleanup. Hustling from room to room, Helen was so efficient and respectful of the residents that she was offered a position on the spot, but she explained that her goal was to complete her training first.

Helen completed her EKG Technologist certificate and, recently, the Everett Community College Phlebotomy Technologist program. With her stackable credentials, she wants to land a position as a Phlebotomist. She says, "I have a future. I have a great outlook. I am forever grateful to the CATCH Program. My confidence is back and I have goals again."

# Success Stories

## Haydee at Full Employment Council

### 21st Century Healthcare Works Program

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A single mother of two, Haydee was attempting to re-enter the workforce after having been unemployed for more than a year. With the initial goal of becoming a Registered Nurse (RN), she came to the Full Employment Council (FEC) seeking assistance with classroom training and employment. However, discussions with her counselor revealed that immediate employment was a high priority, so Haydee's employment plan was updated to reflect a shorter training program, a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) class with Metropolitan Community College (MCC) at Penn Valley. When Haydee learned that FEC was also holding a Patient Care Technician (PCT)—CNA Plus cohort at the same school, she requested to join this class in progress to earn additional credentials. After networking with the educational partners at MCC Penn Valley, FEC staff was able to negotiate Haydee's entry into the additional program. She subsequently completed the PCT course and began working with staff to find employment in her field. Haydee attended the Bi-State Healthcare Hiring event coordinated by FEC where she spoke with several healthcare employers who were interested in her skill set.

On September 8, 2012, FEC staff received a thank you note from Haydee explaining that she had accepted a position with Research Medical Center in Kansas City, Missouri.

Through the HPOG program, Haydee received supports in the form of tuition, uniforms and supplies, counseling, and job search activities that helped her earn credentials and find employment. Based on the determination they've seen in Haydee, FEC staff believe nothing can stop her from achieving her long-term goal of becoming an RN.

# Success Stories

## Prudence at Gateway Technical College

### Health Profession Opportunity Project (HPOP)

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**P**rudence (Trudy) worked for many years in environmental services. She cleaned in the ER and other areas of the hospital. As a single mother of four children, she said she had always wanted a better job which would allow her to be a better provider for her kids. She had a desire to provide patient care. However, without the skills or the means to acquire the skills, she had resigned herself to taking care of the building instead of patients.

Today her life has changed for the better. Trudy completed the Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare (WFHC)–All Saints CNA program in March. After months of applying for CNA positions, she was finally offered a CNA position in the WFHC–All Saints ER.

Trudy said she called HPOP first on the happy day she was offered the job because, without the opportunity that HPOP gave her to get her CNA certification, this day would not have been possible. She wanted the HPOP staff to know how grateful she was for the program and thankful that it was there at a time in her life when she needed it the most. She started her new job on September 9th.

# Success Stories

## Toni at Gateway Community and Technical College Gateway Health Profession Opportunity Project

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**T**oni was a single mom in her early thirties who had been living and working in Atlanta as a successful hair stylist. Her recent divorce had rattled her life, and she knew it was time to take a new direction in order to be self-sufficient. Toni was lucky to have supportive parents who agreed to help her. Her parents agreed to provide childcare, a safe home in Northern Kentucky, and food on the table if she could get herself through school. She signed up at Gateway Community and Technical College to take the Nurse Assistant program in the spring of 2012.

Luckily Toni qualified for the HPOG program to assist her in her classes. She received tuition assistance, a textbook, and one-on-one help in Nurse Assistant skills performance, and HPOG paid for her state Nurse Assistant exam. HPOG staff were there to support her throughout the course as she was taking the first step toward pursuing her Registered Nurse degree. Toni took the assistance and added her own hard work and perseverance to achieve the highest grade in her class and pass the state test.

In July of 2012, the career and placement staff hosted a Nurse Aid job fair and invited several agencies to participate. Employers were invited to set up tables with recruitment and hiring materials. Work space was available for students to fill out job applications, and classroom space was also available for on-the-spot interviews. Senior Helpers of Northern Kentucky (NKY) interviewed Toni that day on campus, and by the following weekend, Toni had been offered a job and was shadowing another employee as part of her training.

Toni recently stopped by the HPOG program office to share that she loves her job! She likes her co-workers, her supervisors, and her clients and their families. The job is providing supplemental income to help her feel more self-sufficient, and she is able to continue with her schooling to become a Registered Nurse.

Senior Helpers NKY was excited to participate in an event that provided a quality applicant on the spot. The agency is incredibly pleased with Toni's work ethic and clinical skills. She hit the ground running and has made a significant difference in the lives of her clients and their families. Senior Helpers NKY will continue to communicate with HPOG for employee referrals, attend career events, and be part of Gateway's HPOG Employer Board.

# Success Stories

## Katrina at Kansas Department of Commerce Kansas Health Professions Opportunity Program (KHPOP)

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**K**atrina, a single mother with one child, came to the Workforce Center in the spring of 2011, seeking assistance with training expenses. She did not receive public assistance when she enrolled in KHPOP, but did receive FAFSA grant money. She came in as a certified Paramedic employed with Sedgwick County EMS, but she was underemployed in that capacity.

Katrina determined that she would like to pursue training to become an RN. She had enrolled in the EMT to Nursing Bridge program with Pratt Community College when she came to KHPOP requesting assistance. She was approved for KHPOP eligibility, attended the training program with Pratt, completed her training in May 2012, and took and passed her NCLEX exam on June 4, 2012. Within a week of passing her NCLEX exam, she was employed full time as a Registered Nurse with Conmed Healthcare Management, which provides medical care to incarcerated individuals.

KHPOP gave her assistance for gas, books, and supplies that she said would not have been purchased or would have created a huge burden for herself and her son without this support. Further, she said, "I am very thankful for the financial and emotional support that this program provided me." While Katrina was responsible for the hard work and dedication required to improve her situation for herself and her family, the assistance offered by the KHPOP program gave her the resources to overcome obstacles that may have otherwise halted her progress toward her long-term career goals.

# Success Stories

## Sylvia at Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, Inc.

### CareerWorks, Inc. Healthcare Training Institute

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CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute (HTI), located in the inner city of Milwaukee, has had several successes during its first year of operation. One such success story came through Aurora, one of its acute care partnership agencies. This story starts with Sylvia Bingenheimer, a 25-year-old single mother.

Sylvia has legal custody of not only her seven-year-old son but also an eight-year-old cousin. (Sylvia's father originally had custody of the cousin, but when he died, 21-year-old Sylvia took her young cousin in.)

Sylvia's ambition and interest in healthcare led her toward the goal of earning a Bachelor's of Science degree in nursing, so she started working on her dream at Alverno College in Milwaukee. While she went to school and maintained full-time employment, she had the support of her mother, who helped by watching the children. However, during the middle of a school semester, her mother became ill and could no longer care for them. Sylvia had no choice but to reluctantly drop out of school and could not hold onto her job.

Sylvia knew that she needed to regain employment, preferably in her chosen field of healthcare. She explored nursing assistant training options, but feared she could not afford the tuition. Sylvia next contacted UMOS, a local Wisconsin Works (W-2) agency that provides employment services. During this time, MAWIB was working with UMOS to recruit HPOG participants. When UMOS referred Sylvia to MAWIB, she received a call from MAWIB staff who told her about a unique training opportunity through MAWIB/HTI and Aurora Health Care. Aurora was offering training with a high potential outcome of employment after successful completion.

Since Sylvia had wanted to work in a hospital, she decided to learn more about this opportunity. She attended a MAWIB/HTI orientation on April 22, 2011, and was accepted into an Aurora CNA class that started on May 3. She successfully completed training and graduated on May 24, 2011. In June of 2011, Sylvia passed her state competency test and was placed on the State of Wisconsin's Nurse Aide Registry.

Upon graduation, Sylvia applied for a position as a CNA with Aurora and soon became employed at one of its hospitals, West Allis Memorial, where she is still employed. Although her mother continues to have health issues, Sylvia is working out childcare and hopes to return to Alverno in the near future to continue her nursing studies. Since employment, Sylvia has received additional training at Aurora and has advanced from a CNA to a Personal Care Assistant (PCA). Sylvia hopes that the HTI HPOG program can support her desire to progress in her healthcare career. She is currently considering her next step to be enrolling in medical training for either diagnostic sonography or respiratory therapy, and she maintains her dream of eventually becoming an RN.

# Success Stories

## Perfecto at New Hampshire Office of Minority Health and Refugee Affairs Health Profession Opportunity Project

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**P**erfecto is a 31 year old Latino male who originates from Los Angeles. He grew up in the inner city in L.A. His entire family has a history of gang involvement and domestic violence. Wanting to escape that lifestyle, he made a decision to move to New Hampshire with his wife and baby. After arriving in New Hampshire, he was working mainly in low paying seasonal construction jobs. These jobs didn't offer him a path towards the future or any job security. In his interview for entry into HPOP, Perfecto expressed interest in becoming either an emergency medical technician or entering the dental field.

After doing some career planning work with his case manager he decided that dental assisting would be a good fit. They then explored the educational options and selected a program with a very hands-on learning approach. Given Perfecto's learning style and past academic experience, this seemed like a program that would foster his success. The HPOP program helped him with several supportive services: securing reliable child care so that he could consistently show up for school and work, mileage reimbursement so he could afford to travel the 55-mile roundtrip from his home to his school, car repair so he had reliable transportation and interview clothes so he could put his best foot forward. He was hired immediately upon completion of his dental assistant program coursework by the dentist with whom he had been interning during the HPOP program. At this job placement, however, he had been told that there would be a permanent position for him but that position turned out to be dependent upon other staffing configuration changes that the employer anticipated making. These changes ended up not happening but Perfecto did not lose faith. Instead he began working in another practice that is enlarging and building a surgical suite. He has been asked to staff the new surgical room and will be making \$20 per hour.

Anytime someone brings up the HPOP program, he proudly says, "That's my program!" He says that he never imagined that he'd be making the amount of money that he is making or that he would love the job he has. He is particularly struck by the fact that he went from a history of 22 times in a juvenile detention center to now wearing a suit and tie to work. Having a baby made him realize he wanted out of the gang life, HPOP has allowed him to find that better life.

Like many HPOP students, he has a close relationship with his case manager and others working in HPOP. The team has told him how proud they are of him and he has said that he never heard those words of encouragement from his own family. Growing up within the gang culture in L.A., he says he mostly just heard his mom warn him not to get shot. Even upon securing the current position that he has and sharing this good news with his family, he says his mom mainly tells him she hopes he doesn't mess up this opportunity.

# Success Stories

## Luis at Pima County Community College District Pathways to Healthcare Program

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**A**fter a devastating automobile accident, life changed for Luis Martinez. Injuries made continuing his career in construction impossible. Looking for options other than public benefits to support his family, Luis went to the local Pima County One-Stop Center. There he learned about Pima Community College's Health Professions Opportunity Grant, Pathways to Healthcare Program. A career in healthcare fit with his goals, and Luis made the decision to start on a new pathway in the nursing profession.

After entering the HPOG program, Luis soon learned that his assessment scores were well below the college's requirements to enter the Nursing Assistant (NA) program. Knowing that Luis struggled with a language barrier, his HPOG adviser referred him to a partnering agency, a local literacy program. After one month of hard work, he significantly improved his scores, but they were still not high enough to meet the entrance requirements. In addition to improving his assessment scores, Luis also needed to earn his GED in order to enter the NA program.

Working with the HPOG academic advisers, Luis stayed determined and jumped at the opportunity to participate in the HPOG contextualized College Readiness class. Luis learned that the 10-week College Readiness course is designed specifically to help HPOG participants prepare to enter and successfully complete their chosen healthcare training program. Luis began the class and found that he enjoyed the community atmosphere and also was quickly improving. After successfully completing the 10-week course, he not only scored high enough to enter the NA program, but he also earned his GED!

Participating in the HPOG College Readiness class and receiving HPOG support services allowed Luis to earn his GED and enroll in the NA program. At first, Luis struggled academically in the nursing program. With new-found confidence and communication skills, he met with his nursing instructor to address his challenges. From that moment on, he performed well. Luis successfully completed the NA program and quickly received two job offers. He has since passed the state certification exam to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and his new goal is to continue on the career pathways to become a Practical Nurse.

# Success Stories

## Rosario at Research Foundation of the City University of New York–Hostos Community College

### Allied Health Career Pipeline Program

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**T**he Allied Health Career Pipeline Program at Hostos Community College is in the business of “transforming lives through allied healthcare,” providing low-income individuals and TANF recipients with training in allied health. Its students are at many different stations in their lives. Some have been demoralized by bureaucratic systems, dehumanized by small-minded individuals, or born and raised in disenfranchised despair without a sense of community. Others have been laid off by downsizing and sought to change career paths. Sadly, poverty offers dead-end solutions to discriminatory dilemmas.

At the core of this predicament lives Rosario Rivera, an amazing single mother of five children, four sons and a daughter. Her mantra is, simply, “Change is a good thing.”

Seeking change, Rosario went to the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, known as SoBRO, a community-based organization that offers programs in youth and adult education, career training and job placement, affordable housing development, business assistance and entrepreneurship, and commercial revitalization. There she completed TABE reading and math tests and learned that she might qualify for the Pipeline Program. As a Pipeline partner, SoBRO was able to refer Rosario with her test scores to the program’s intake coordinator for enrollment.

Between enrollment in the Certified Nursing Assistant course and clinical rotation, Rosario, a TANF recipient, faced a setback. Her living situation changed. She and her children moved from their home and neighborhood into a Brooklyn family shelter. She had to wake up at about 5:30 a.m. to ready her children and herself to commute to the Bronx for school.

Throughout the intensive CNA training, Rosario was steadfast and committed to achieving the change she wanted. She completed the training requirements, earned her New York State CNA credential, and was successfully placed in a six-week career-focused internship at Bronx-Lebanon Special Care Center. According to her site supervisor, she “followed directions and performed tasks without hesitation and with precision..., was a fast learner, [and] quickly learned the floor and residents.” She performed so well that the facility contacted the Pipeline Program to extend a job offer to Rosario for a CNA position.

Rosario is currently earning \$15.43 per hour at Bronx-Lebanon Special Care Center, where her “change is a good thing” mantra helps her continue to learn and grow.

# Success Stories

## Alex at the San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc. Bridge to Employment in the Healthcare Industry Program

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Alex came to the Bridge to Employment program because she was struggling to make ends meet with her previous employment options. She was seeking assistance in obtaining an entry-level certificate and job experience in the healthcare field. Her long-term goal is to become a nurse, but she recognized she would need to take several steps along the way, starting with a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certificate and then hopefully pursuing a Licensed Vocational Nurse certificate.

Alex shared the difficulties of being a single mother with her navigator and identified childcare and housing as her most pressing barriers. Due to her strong work ethic, she had a good work history but no formal job training post-high school. This situation created a skills gap barrier as well. After she enrolled in the program, Alex was forced to move from her previously stable housing, adding yet another barrier to her employment goals. She contacted her navigator to explore resources and options for housing while she completed training.

The Bridge to Employment program assisted Alex by developing a plan that addressed barriers and identified types of support the program could give her. They included tuition support to cover the cost of the CNA program as well as transportation assistance and items required by the CNA training program. Alex was between jobs during this period, and she lacked financial resources to cover these important items. By working with her navigator during her housing crisis, she was able to identify other housing options. The program assisted in covering the expense of her CNA licensure and also provided support and accountability toward that goal.

Currently Alex is in a stable housing situation and has completed all of the course requirements for the CNA program. She is working toward retaking her CNA exam and has obtained full-time employment as a caregiver at Las Villas del Norte. Her new employment was made possible by her recent training as a CNA. She has also identified an LVN program and completed the admissions steps to get started in October 2012.

# Success Stories

## LaDasia at Schenectady County Community College

### Health Care Opportunities

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**L**aDasia came to the HPOG partner, the Albany Community Action Partnership (ACAP), a young single mother with two sons under the age of two. She wanted to find training that would give her an opportunity to stop relying on TANF public assistance and become financially independent. As a compassionate individual, she believed that, if given the chance to take the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training, she would provide the same great care to her clients that she had given her own children.

Throughout her training LaDasia faced various situations that almost derailed her success. Luckily she received encouragement and guidance from ACAP staff members and her nurse instructor. During the training, LaDasia's mother and only support system was arrested and sent to jail. She temporarily lost her public assistance benefits and almost became hopeless. She also faced transportation issues getting her children to daycare and then herself to the clinical site. ACAP staff worked to decrease these barriers by providing transportation, assistance, and referrals.

After successfully completing training, LaDasia worked with ACAP staff to obtain her driver's license and secured full-time employment. She has now reached her six-month job retention milestone, but it has not come easy. Two months ago her two-year-old was diagnosed with autism. She was working full time while accommodating her son's need for therapy three hours a day, three times a week. She has made adjustments but perseveres through hard work. She has not yielded to the temptation to quit, even though life is tough. She appreciates the support she receives through the HPOG program and has begun to speak with current students about her experiences and the opportunities the program has given her.

# Success Stories

## Quinton at South Carolina Department of Social Services

### Project Hope

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**Q**uinton is a 21-year-old young man from rural South Carolina. He was recruited to Project Hope through the YouthBuild Program, which helps unemployed low-income youth without a high school diploma to obtain a GED and train for an occupation.

Quinton dropped out of high school in the 11th grade to take care of his family. His grandmother was the stable factor in the family. After being home for a while, he decided to enter Job Corps. This did not work out, and he returned home with no direction and nothing to do. A friend gave him a brochure about the YouthBuild program. Quinton completed the application and was accepted in the program.

The program helped him improve his academic skills and taught him how to be a team player and build relationships. The program also helped him to understand the job market and his potential. After his grandmother was placed in a nursing home, all of the responsibility for caring for the family, including his two younger sisters, fell upon his shoulders. After Quinton received his GED, the director of the YouthBuild program told him about Project Hope. Quinton informed the Project Hope career counselor that he wanted to further his education, become a leader in his community, and go into the healthcare field. He shadowed an EMS training officer, saw how an EMS helped strangers in distress, and wanted the same opportunity to help others.

When Quinton started Boot Camp, he was extremely shy, but he gradually gained confidence, and the Project Hope staff discovered that he was a special and sensitive young man. During the afternoon classes, the instructor would approach him, shake his hand, ask how he felt that day and what he had to share, and let him see that he could accomplish the task. The instructor gave him the encouragement he needed, and, as the weeks progressed, others witnessed his big heart. Quinton finally felt like he was accepted by his Boot Camp classmates. The Project HOPE staff noticed that Quinton had a journal and was writing with a passion. He told the staff that he loved to write poetry because it made him feel alive and connected to the world. The staff asked him to share his poem during the graduation ceremony.

Since completing Boot Camp at Midlands Technical College, he has been studying at Central Carolina Technical College to become a Patient Care Technician. He has completed CNA, Phlebotomy, and EKG, which are the three required courses for the position, and is awaiting his certification. Quinton is currently enrolled in the EMS certificate program. After completing this certification, his desire is to complete a four-year degree program in a related health field.

Quinton is currently employed full time with Colonial Health Family Practice in Sumter. His employer has complete confidence in him and has provided him training on the CBC machine. The employer's satisfaction with Quinton's work is best summed up in a follow-up email from the hiring manager to the Project Hope Job Developer: "We love Quinton – thank you so much for sending him to us!"

# Success Stories

## Jovan at Southland Health Care Forum, Inc.

### Pathways to Health Care Occupations

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**W**hen Jovan Clark first came to the Southland Health Care Forum, Inc. (SHCF) in 2007, she had already completed Certified Nursing Assistant training. She completed SHCF's Phlebotomy program to increase her skills and employability, though her long-term goal was to become a Registered Nurse (RN). After Jovan was accepted to the RN program at Prairie State College, one of SHCF's major partners, SHCF staff interviewed her and invited her to apply for the HPOG program.

Jovan went on to become one of the highest-scoring individuals in her RN class. On March 5, 2012, Jovan was inducted into Prairie State College's RN Honors Society, and eventually she became the society's president.

Jovan graduated from her nursing program in May 2012 and passed her licensure exam August 1, 2012. In September 2012, she began her current job as an RN at South Suburban Hospital.

# Success Stories

## Elena at Suffolk County Department of Labor Suffolk County Healthcare Occupational Opportunity for Learning (SCHOOL)

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**E**lena is a middle-aged woman who entered the social welfare system because her husband abandoned her and abducted her children to his home country of Turkey, forcing her to enter a shelter.

Fighting this illegal abduction and her new-found poverty, Elena was a determined client who was given the opportunity to enter the SCHOOL Project-funded Medical Office Administration program at Hunter Business School. She excelled in her studies and followed through on all her requirements. Elena also worked closely with her Suffolk Works Employment Program (SWEP) counselor to resolve other life issues, including childcare challenges when her children were returned.

Elena completed the vocational program in June 2011 and was selected to participate in the Health Careers Program, a subsidized employment program that gave TANF recipients the opportunity to work and gain experience in a Suffolk County Health Center. She was placed at the Amityville Health Center.

Although this was a temporary program lasting only 16 weeks, when her assignment was over, her health center supervisor referred her to Dominion Health Services, a health employment staffing firm that supplies staff to the health industry. By December, Elena was hired by Dominion and placed back at the Amityville Health Center where she is working 35 hours per week and earning a sustainable wage of \$14 per hour as a medical billing specialist.

# Success Stories

## DJ at Temple University of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education

### Health Information Professions (HIP) Career Pathways Program

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**D**J was employed at Independence Blue Cross for six years as a Workflow Coordinator in the Adjustment Unit. The company downsized, and her department was cut. She was able to obtain unemployment benefits and continuously looked for employment but was unable to find anything in the field in which she had worked. At the HIP program orientation, she was worried about the TABE test because she had been out of school 30 years, but she passed the test and was accepted into the program. She came into HIP on February 28, 2011, and her training ended July 2011. She worked hard and was one of the top scorers in her class.

DJ completed the program and obtained an internship at Philadelphia Mental Health Center. There she got great reviews and did a lot of medical billing. She thought she would be able to work there upon completion but was disappointed when she was not offered a position. She continued to apply online for jobs, attend job fairs, and network with people from her church.

Her job search, which was conducted onsite four days a week at the HIP program, lasted six months. She became depressed after completing applications, going on first interviews, and not getting call-backs, but she decided that giving up was not an option. The program provided strengths-based counseling that focused on DJ's ties to her religion and offered encouragement, a transportation allowance, and a base of support she could trust.

DJ had an interview with H.T.H. Worldwide, a company that identifies insurance coverage and processes health claims for travelers who are leaving or entering the country. When she informed her career placement coordinators about the interview, she was told to think about the distance (28 miles) and the time and mode of transportation that would be needed to commute (1.5 hours each way by public transportation). She was advised to try to find something closer, but she was determined to work for this company if she could.

She was offered a position with H.T.H. Worldwide and told the position was a temp-to-hire based on her performance over a three-month period. The position as a temp did not offer benefits. She accepted the position because she felt her motivation, dedication, hard work, attention to details, and her communication, computer, and organizational skills would help her perform her job responsibilities. These qualities, among others, were factors that influenced her supervisors to give her a full-time position that offered advancement and full benefits.

DJ has been excited about returning to work and feels gaining employment has made her independent and self-sufficient once again. She believes the skills that she learned from the HIP program, such as medical terminology and abbreviations and health insurance claims forms, helped her obtain and perform her job. She was very appreciative of the resources and incentives earned from her studies with HIP that enabled her to get needed work clothing. Her story is one of someone who, reinventing herself through education and training, opened doors that led to success.

# Success Stories

## Nichole at Turtle Mountain Community College Project CHOICE

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**H**ello, my name is Nichole Azure. I am a mother of three, a full-time employee at the Bottineau Good Samaritan Nursing Home, and a recent graduate of the LPN program at the Turtle Mountain Community College.

It has been a long and difficult journey in getting to this stage in my life. My goals and dreams in life have always centered on having a career in the healthcare field, but, with the many obstacles I have faced, it has taken me a bit longer than most to get here. I have recently passed my North Dakota state boards for my LPN, which is a great accomplishment. I express my utmost gratitude and appreciation to Project CHOICE in helping me achieve my dreams.

It is always a struggle to afford school, daycare, and the continually rising price of gas. Project CHOICE made it easier for me to attend class full time and receive my degree. They were there for me, not only financially, but also as a place to have any concerns I had addressed and resolved.

It feels amazing to have finally reached a goal of mine after all these years, and to have had the support of Project CHOICE these past two years was a gift. The bonus to this all was that Project CHOICE also provided the funding for my testing fees for state licensure, which I would have been saving for months to afford. Because of Project CHOICE, I now have my LPN degree and license, and not only will I be in a new career as a nurse, but they also gave me the foundation to go on for my RN degree at the University of North Dakota.

# Success Stories

## Cathy at Will County on behalf of The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago

### Healthcare Careers—Skilled Workers, Strong Earnings

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**S**ingle mother Cathy Kaczmarek was laid off from her job in banking. She knew, as she was exhausting her unemployment benefits, that she needed to find a way to make a career change so she could support herself and her child. Cathy had been out of school for more than 30 years but was familiar with caregiving and encouraged to pursue a career in healthcare. When Cathy found out about the HPOG program, she was thrilled and certain that those supporting her participation in the program were angels, as she had no other way to finance her education. A good student, Cathy applied herself to her academics and created a new network of friends that supported each other as they pursued their education. Cathy completed the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course and passed her State certification exam a month later. She was hired by a local assisted living facility as a CNA. Stellar reviews from her employer reinforce and affirm Cathy's efforts and the value of the HPOG grant in providing Cathy with this opportunity.

# Success Stories

## Yukarie at Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

### Health Careers for All (HCA)

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**Y**ukarie Harrison was excited about the possibilities presented to her in the Medical Business Information Technology (MBIT) training and had well-considered plans for her future. However, she had a questionable prospect for training completion and subsequent employment. She was 22 years old at the time of enrollment, had a family background of long-term reliance on TANF, marginal CASAS scores, and a scattered work history. She also struggled to adopt a professional demeanor. Her mother's chronic illness had required her to withdraw from several training programs to care for younger siblings. To her credit, she continued to seek training opportunities.

In the final days of the MBIT pre-training, Yukarie engaged in an intense verbal altercation with another student over a minor issue that almost cost her place in the MBIT class. Her entrance scores were just adequate. She was admitted, but issues about professionalism (such as reacting to the constant student gossiping) continued through the first quarter. The dedicated and engaged team of instructors voiced their concern. When the team members spoke with her, she listened and said she wanted to improve. Her academic progress continued.

At the end of the first quarter, Yukarie showed her transformation in her response to an incident that began when a person in the classroom insulted her during her final presentation. She continued her report without reacting to the insult. She completed the first quarter work (the provocateur was asked not to return for the second quarter).

Her second quarter internship placement was with a local senior services organization. It proved to be a difficult assignment and included interaction with at least one abusive, potentially dangerous client at the organization. Yukarie was miserable, but decided to stay and not accept her internship instructor's offer to move her. At the celebration luncheon at the end of class, she talked about her decision to complete her internship at the senior services organization despite the obstacles. She agreed when one of her classmates candidly offered that the experience was exactly what she needed.

Two weeks after her internship ended, Yukarie was offered the position of Donation Coordination Assistant at the organization, working in a different department, under a different supervisor. This was a part-time, temporary position, but after successfully completing two months on the job she was offered and accepted a full-time permanent position with benefits and has received at least one significant raise in the six months since. She's decided to continue training, with HCA's assistance, in the healthcare field.

# Success Stories

## Fredrick at Workforce Investment Board SDA-83, Inc.

### Northeast Louisiana Professional Healthcare Opportunities—Careers and Support Project (The NELA PHOCAS Project)

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**W**hen Fredrick applied for sponsorship through PHOCAS, he was enrolled in a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program, but there were serious concerns that he would not complete the program. To support himself and his educational pursuits, Fredrick was working two jobs—one as a certified nursing assistant and the second as a ward clerk. This left little time for the rigorous study that was required for the program and for learning the skills that he wanted to master.

The financial assistance provided through the HPOG program made it possible for Fred to leave one of his jobs, so he could focus on his education. Extremely enthusiastic about the LPN program, Fredrick's monthly timesheets demonstrated 100 percent attendance and excellent progress. Although the LPN program was very strenuous, Fredrick's positive attitude and energetic approach made him an inspiration to his fellow classmates. It was encouraging for the whole PHOCAS program to watch him come closer to his goal.

Fredrick graduated from the LPN program at Northeast Louisiana Technical College – Winnsboro Campus on May 10, 2011. He then passed his State board exam and found a position as an LPN on the medical surgical floor at the Franklin Medical Center.

Fredrick was very grateful for the PHOCAS program because he knew he could not afford the LPN training on his own. Because he now has a stable income, he has also been able to buy himself a dependable car. Fredrick is continuing to work hard to further advance in his career. Although his salary is now twice what he was previously earning, that pales in comparison to the increased self-esteem and pride that Fredrick has after going through the program. In April 2012, Fredrick began taking Registered Nurse (RN) courses. He recently reported to his case manager that his courses are going well—he spends a lot of time reading!

# Success Stories

## Nairobi at The WorkPlace, Inc.

### Health CareeRX Academy

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**N**airobi Hernandez, a single mom with a four-year-old son named Ayden, was a TANF recipient living in Bridgeport. She attended the Health CareeRX Academy orientation on January 26, 2012. She met with Workforce Specialist Cynthia McNair on January 30 and completed an intake form, indicating that she wanted to enroll in the LPN apprenticeship program. Nairobi already had a Certified Nurse Assistant license and had prior work experience through a home health agency. However, she desired an occupation with higher earning potential and career satisfaction. Academy staff explained that, due to employer input regarding poor employment potential and high training costs, they would not be offering the LPN apprenticeship. She was disappointed, as she wanted to improve her skills and build a viable career, but she did not give up.

Nairobi was excited about the opportunity HPOG presented for her to further her education and training and build a career in healthcare. Before, she had found it difficult to take classes due to financial constraints. Once enrolled in the HPOG program, Nairobi completed the healthcare orientation and core skills training with the Connecticut League for Nursing and subsequently enrolled at St. Vincent's College for training as a Pharmacy Technician. She also secured a full-time job as a CNA at St. Vincent's Medical Center.

Nairobi Hernandez is well on her way toward her long-term goal of becoming a Registered Nurse! In addition, her son Ayden was accepted into a charter school and is doing very well there.



