



Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG)

Compendium of Success Stories

August 2014



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Building Pathways to a Brighter Future



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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August 2014

Many low-income Americans face significant challenges to finding a good paying job that can help them transition off of public assistance and enable them to move along a sustained career pathway that will support their families. 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 care their patients need.

The [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program was created 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 HPOG participants and it's a win for healthcare employers. HPOG programs are responsive to community workforce needs and aim to improve job prospects for adults in low-income families, matching careers in growing fields with people who are eager to fill them.

This collection of success stories describes how 32 HPOG participants, one from each grantee site, have progressed in a healthcare career pathway. They are a diverse group of individuals. They are men and women and include individuals who speak English as a second language, single-mothers, tribal members, veterans and many others. They come from all over the country, from places like Tucson, Arizona; Florence, Kentucky; and Milton, Pennsylvania. 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 attributes that have led to their success. They are resilient, determined, possess a strong work ethic and are focused on improving their lives and the lives of their families.

By reading their stories you will see the progress they have made and how HPOG is making a difference—helping them build *their* pathway to a better future.

Sincerely,

/s/

Earl Johnson
Director
Office of Family Assistance

Introduction

Authorized 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 in-demand healthcare occupations. The HPOG program is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, [Office of Family Assistance](#).

Grants were first awarded in September 2010, and grantees are now well into their fourth of a five-year program. HPOG awards were made to 32 entities located across 23 states, including four State government bodies, nine local Workforce Investment Boards (three of which operate one-stop career centers), 12 institutions of higher education (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. Many grantees have made strong and concerted efforts to serve the most at-risk populations in their communities and to assist them in overcoming barriers to obtaining meaningful employment leading to a career pathway.

The third *Compendium of Success Stories* captures inspiring journeys of real program participants and shows the kind of transformations they can experience through HPOG. Stories were identified by grantees themselves, with full consent from each individual participant to share his or her name and story. These accounts give a small glimpse of the full effect HPOG has on its participants and brings to life the data collected about the HPOG program—telling the stories of 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, and sharing them helps to foster the growth of a learning community. Also underway is comprehensive evaluation that will provide more information on program implementation, systems change, outcomes, and impact. The evaluation will help expand the base of evidence for improving outcomes for TANF recipients and other low-income individuals.

These *Success Stories* were collected by ICF International, the technical assistance provider for the Office of Family Assistance. The compendium includes one success story for each of the 32 grantees, indexed by grantee, state, and occupation. To access this document and other supporting documents, examples, and related information electronically, please visit the HPOG Community Website at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/hpog>.

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Success Stories

Juan at Alamo Community College

Alamo Healthcare Professions Training Initiative

In a very challenging economy, Juan, an unemployed single parent with two children, was desperately seeking employment through one of San Antonio Texas's Workforce Solutions Centers. With a flyer and a case manager's referral, he caught word of a great career training opportunity through the Alamo Colleges' Healthcare Professions Training Initiative (HPTI), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

Following a quick call, he was set to meet with one of HPTI's intake specialists, Arlene Esparza, at the Alamo Colleges Westside Training and Education Center. As the lead career development specialist, Arlene asked Juan about his interests, needs, and ability to make his way into their Environmental Services (EVS) program. Juan was motivated, having already begun to improve his skills through the completion of English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. Juan met HPTI's eligibility requirements and two weeks later found himself at his first day of class.

Juan was a model student, and became part of a classroom group that was a strong and supportive team. While participating in EVS program classes, Juan had a perfect attendance record. When he went on to complete his time-limited employment training at the University Health System's hospital, he again earned a perfect attendance record. During his employment training, Juan gained a reputation for reliability and competence. When he completed this final part of his training, Juan was told by one of his supervisors that the hospital that he should apply for an upcoming EVS opening.

Following his completion of the time-limited job training and filing an application at the hospital, Juan and Arlene met weekly to search for jobs, complete employment forms, practice interview skills, and help Juan find employment. He was persistent and thorough, always following up with potential employers and adhering to the guidance of his case manager. He remained positive despite several weeks of tedious job searching and closed doors.

Finally, an opening became available at the University Health System's hospital, and Juan was called for an interview. At the interview, Juan learned that he had to provide additional information to satisfy the background needs of this employer, but he worked to complete these requirements quickly. A few more anxious days went by, and finally the news arrived: Juan was

Success Stories



being offered a job to join the EVS team at University Health System's hospital. Juan was overwhelmed with joy. He had achieved his goal. Juan called the HPTI team first to share the good news. This was a personal victory for Juan, but was also a huge relief to know that he was now able to plan for a better future for his children and family.

Success Stories

Katie at Passaic County Community College

Northern New Jersey Health Professions Consortium (Bergen Community College)

Several years ago, Katie enrolled in a program to become a registered medical assistant. After completing the course, she found employment and enjoyed her job but was laid off a few years later. Although Katie tried to find a new job, the feedback she got from potential employers was that she needed certification and more billing experience to increase her chances of employment. Katie was determined to act on that feedback, so she researched programs in her area and found Passaic County Community College's (PCCC) [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program, funded by the Office of Family Assistance and administered by the [Northern New Jersey Health Professions Consortium](#). She enrolled in PCCC's administrative medical assistant course in the spring of 2013.

Katie successfully completed the course and passed the National Health Career Association's certification exam for administrative medical assistants. To prepare her for interviews, Katie took the initiative to visit Dress for Success (DFS), a PCCC partner organization that promotes disadvantaged women's economic independence through the provisions of professional attire, a network of support and career development tools. In addition, Katie later participated in DFS's on campus presentation to graduates of PCCC's HPOG program, during which they taught successful job interviewing strategies and the importance of soft skills in the workplace. After the presentation, the DFS representative showed the students a selection of "lovingly used" suits from DFS, scarfs for additional accessorizing, and makeup, all of which were donated by community members and DFS' corporate sponsors. In addition, they were invited to DFS' Morris County shop to choose additional clothing and accessories so they would have professional clothes for their first days of employment.

Armed with her training credentials and professional attire, Katie interviewed for a medical billing position at a sleep disorders center, but during the interview the billing manager offered her a different position in marketing as a physician liaison. That position involved visiting medical offices in various locations and explaining the sleep center's services to staff. Katie was

Success Stories



happy to accept the offered position. After a few months, she was promoted to marketing manager, which included an upgrade from hourly to salaried wages.

Katie loves interacting with the staff at the sleep center, as well as the people she meets at the medical offices around the region. Katie continues to grow in her position and has taken ownership of marketing efforts and materials. In fact, she developed a colorful brochure, which describes all the center's available services.

Not only is Katie confident in her knowledge of her new field, but she also has the soft skills and attire to meet with physicians and other stakeholders. Prior to starting the program, Katie's career path seemed uncertain; however, through her work with PCCC, she has obtained clarity about her goals and how to achieve them. Katie's ultimate career goal is to work for a hospital or a multi-physician office. Accordingly, she plans to enroll part-time in college soon and work towards a bachelor's degree in business or healthcare management. Katie credits PCCC's training program and DFS for preparing her academically and professionally for her current position and giving her the tools she needs to continue to move up the career ladder.

Success Stories

Edison at Blackfeet Community College

Issksiniip Project

Edison was born and raised on the Crow Indian Reservation in southeastern Montana and, in his words, has “a unique mixture of Indian blood” running through his veins – his father is Crow, his mother is Oglala Sioux, and his grandmother is from the Assiniboine Tribe. He was a student at Montana State University – Bozeman before applying for the [Blackfeet Community College’s Issksiniip Project](#), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) initiative funded by the Office of Family Assistance. The Issksiniip Project is designed to assist Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants and other low-income individuals obtain education and training in high demand health occupations while simultaneously improving the ability of the Blackfeet reservation to meet local healthcare needs.

Edison was not selected during his first application process, but, because he had heard so many great things from friends participating in the Project, he applied again while completing his Master’s program at Montana State University – Billings and was accepted in 2013. Edison was motivated to complete his studies by his desire to improve the quality of life for Native people. He is working towards his Master’s in Health Administration because he wants to be a voice for people at the administrative level – where decisions are discussed and made.

Edison’s motivation to enroll in the Issksiniip Project stemmed from not only his desire to enter the health profession and better the lives of Native People, but also from his need for financial support to pursue his academic goals. Prior to enrolling in the Project, Edison was in the process of applying for loans to pay for his Master’s education. Faced with the potential for a significant amount of student debt for which Edison may not be able to manage in the long-term, he was uncertain whether he would be able to continue to pursue his education and career interests. He heard from friends that the Issksiniip Project offered an opportunity to obtain a strong education while simultaneously receiving valuable financial aid and career guidance. Through the project, Edison is able to rent a laptop and pay for the remainder of his Master’s education without having to secure outside loans. The project provides Edison with tuition support, access to the computers and Wi-Fi that were necessary for his studies, and career guidance. Edison was particularly grateful for the passion his case management project

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coordinator showed for helping students have a successful school year and overcome academic and life challenges.

Upon completion of his Master's program, Edison will seek employment in health administration at the Indian Health Service offices located within the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. He intends to use the skills acquired through the Issksiniip Project and his undergraduate and graduate work to improve the quality of health care services outreach and administration for American Indians.

Success Stories

Tiffany at Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium

Buffalo and Erie County Health Professions Collaborative

Tiffany found herself in a situation she never thought she would be in. Alone and pregnant, she did not know where to turn. With no support in her life, she knew she had to do something to support herself and her baby. In the fall of 2005, Tiffany received training to be a certified nursing assistant (CNA) through Beachwood Continuing Care, an assisted living facility that paid for her training and licensure. As she tried to make ends meet, she realized how much she loved the work and wanted to find a way to continue her education. As a single parent, no one else was going to take care of her and her son. She needed to set attainable goals for herself to prove that she could be self-sufficient.

Tiffany loved being a CNA and taking care of people so much that she knew she wanted to take her education as far as she could. One step at a time, Tiffany began working her way up the career ladder to become a registered nurse. She took classes at Erie 2 BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) supported by Buffalo Employment and Training Center and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training funds. Tiffany completed her licensed practical nurse (LPN) program in the spring of 2009. That summer she began working part-time at the local VA Hospital. It was while working at the VA that Tiffany became pregnant with her second child. She loved her job at the VA but was only needed on a part-time basis. She knew she had to go the extra mile to make herself more valuable at work so she could move up and obtain a full time position.

In the fall of 2012, Tiffany heard about Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium's Health Professions Collaborative, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. She returned to the Buffalo Employment and Training Center and, at the recommendation of some classmates and friends went to see Ella Holloway, a career counselor for Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Development Consortium's Health Professions Collaborative. They began working together on financial aid

Success Stories



for Tiffany's registered nurse (RN) program at Trocaire College, and she was awarded additional WIA training funds. They also found assistance to pay for books and for daycare for her children.

Buffalo and Erie County Health Professions Collaborative offered Tiffany a transportation assistance allowance, which paid \$5 per day on each day she attended school. When Tiffany fell behind in her rent payments, the Collaborative used its self-sufficiency fund to help Tiffany get caught up and back on the right track. The Job Developer coached Tiffany on interviewing skills and sent her weekly job leads.

Today, Tiffany has completed her RN program, continues to work for the VA and is waiting to take her boards in April 2014. The Buffalo and Erie County Health Professions Collaborative has given her the tools and confidence to soar and has helped Tiffany fulfill her dream. Tiffany is now working toward a B.S. in Nursing at Niagara University where she expects to graduate in the fall of 2015. She hopes to continue with her training and specialize as a nurse practitioner or anesthetist. "One hurdle at a time" is Tiffany's motto.

Success Stories

LeeDawn at Cankdeska Cikana Community College

Next Steps Project

LeeDawn is 27 years old and an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. She currently resides in her hometown of Fort Yates, North Dakota with her 4-year-old son who is in his second year of Headstart. Prior to enrolling in [Cankdeska Cikana Community College's](#) Next Steps project, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) initiative funded by the Office of Family Assistance, she worked at the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Headstart Program as a Home Visitor and before that as an Infant/Toddler Caregiver. LeeDawn enrolled in the Next Steps project in March 2011 and was a part of the project's first cohort to participate in its Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA)/Qualified Service Provider (QSP) training.

LeeDawn, for as long as she can remember, has wanted to follow in her grandmother's and aunts' footsteps and become a nurse. She understood that the Next Steps project could give her the supports she needed to achieve her professional dreams. She took three weeks personal leave from work after being accepted into Next Steps to complete the daily training and clinical experiences.

LeeDawn initially became aware of the Next Steps project through her connection to the original directors of the Next Steps project. LeeDawn enrolled in the project when Next Steps staff were on the Standing Rock Reservation recruiting individuals who were interested in gaining CNA/QSP certifications.

Since enrolling in Next Steps, LeeDawn has worked with two "awesome" mentors. These individuals helped her access support services, have discussed her career pathway with her, brainstormed solutions from challenges, and provided positive guidance. After her initial Next Steps training, LeeDawn passed her certified nursing assistance test at Sanford College of Nursing in Bismarck, North Dakota. Her testing success and mentor support motivated her to continue working towards her registered nurse (RN) degree.

In addition to mentoring and paying for her education, Next Steps has provided LeeDawn with mileage and meals reimbursement to attend out of town classes and clinics. The program has also paid daycare expenses for her son, which enabled her to work and go to school full-time.

Success Stories



LeeDawn used her Next Steps training and CNA exam certification to find a job as a CNA/dialysis technician at Medcenter One (now known as Sanford Health) in 2011. She recently switched jobs roles, from working as a clinically certified hemodialysis technician to her current position as a licensed practical nurse.

While working full-time at Sanford Health, LeeDawn also enrolled at the Sitting Bull College where she received an Associate of Science in Practical Nursing. Juggling between being a full-time mother, healthcare professional, and student has meant Lee Dawn has spent many nights studying and time away from her family to attend clinics; commuting long distances and starting work at 5 a.m. on non-clinical days. She knows these efforts are proving worthwhile and that her career pathway is leading to a better life for her family. She feels that it would have been impossible to accomplish all she has over the last two years without the support of Next Steps. LeeDawn recently applied to Bismarck State College's Nursing Program, which is a part of the Dakota Nursing Program. She intends to start the program in the fall of 2014 and complete her Associate RN degree by May 2015.

Success Stories

Ashley at Central Community College

Project HELP

As a teenager, Ashley worked long hours every week to help improve her family's financial situation. Ashley wanted to attend college after high school, but her parents did not support the decision, believing that helping with the family's financial struggles was a first priority.

Despite this, Ashley went to community college, but received little support or guidance during her first year at [Central Community College](#). As the first person in her family to go to college, she did not know where to go for help. She self-registered for more than fifteen credit hours during her first semester without visiting with an advisor. As the semester progressed, she felt overwhelmed trying to manage her job as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) and her education, so she dropped all of her classes and decided to take a break from school. During her time away, however, she remained focused on her dream of becoming a nurse and continued to work as a CNA in a long-term care facility in Genoa, Nebraska.

After a year away from school, Ashley returned to Central Community College, committed to one day becoming a nurse. It was around this time that Ashley also learned from her classmates about Project HELP, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. She enrolled in the project's Practical Nursing program.

Through Project HELP, Ashley received individual case management, scholarships, transportation assistance, tutoring, study materials, job search assistance, resume supplies, and study supplies to help her reach her academic goal to matriculate into the Bryan College of Health Sciences, a small, four-year private college offering undergraduate degrees in nursing and health professions. Ashley shared this goal with her Project HELP support team, and with their assistance, she completed the application and the required essays. She met multiple times with her Project HELP Case Manager, the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST) Specialist, and Career Coach to refine her resume and polish her interview skills, all while maintaining her school and work responsibilities.

Ashley leveraged the support she received from Project HELP to matriculate into the Bryan College of Health Sciences nursing program, where she will begin her studies in the fall of 2014.

Success Stories



In addition to being a role model for other Project HELP students at Central Community College, Ashley has been an excellent role model for her siblings. Following Ashley's example, her brother has enrolled in a higher education institution to study medicine and her sister has enrolled in a cosmetology program.

Before enrolling in Project HELP, Ashley was overwhelmed by her family, work and school responsibilities, which led her to temporarily drop out of school. But, during her time away, she continued to work as a CNA and was determined to do more. With Project HELP's support, Ashley has been successful academically and is working towards obtaining a nursing degree. Ashley has demonstrated a great strength and determination that will serve her well in her nursing career.

Success Stories

Daunette at Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit

Work Attributes Toward Careers in Health (WATCH) Project

When Daunette applied to the [WATCH Project](#), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) initiative funded by the Office of Family Assistance, she was 47, a single mother of a 17-year-old daughter and a naturalized US citizen from Guyana, South America. She immigrated to the U.S. where she lived with family members and eventually settled in State College, PA.

When her sister married and moved away, Daunette faced the challenge of surviving on the income of a single woman in a rural area. To make ends meet, she worked two part-time jobs as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) and received public assistance. All the while, she nurtured a dream for a better life.

While working as a CNA, Daunette discovered she loved working with the elderly. She applied and was accepted to the Practical Nursing Program at Central PA Institute of Science and Technology (CPI) when she met with Lois Todd, WATCH Project career coordinator.

Struggling to continue her education, Daunette enrolled in the WATCH Project in April 2013. The program offered her services and supports she could not have acquired with her limited resources.

Daunette praises Lois Todd, her WATCH Project career coordinator, for the support she provided while she completed school and started her job search. “From the time I joined WATCH to this day (Lois) has been there guiding me along the way to my success.” When a fire in Daunette’s housing complex threatened to derail her progress towards a licensed practical nurse (LPN) career, Lois was there to help. Suddenly, Daunette and her daughter were homeless. Without someone to help her get organized and find solutions to her problems, Daunette was at risk of dropping out of the nursing program and giving up on her dreams. Lois stepped in immediately to help Daunette find the resources she needed to recover without dropping out of school. Lois encouraged Daunette to continue attending class. She helped Daunette find temporary housing in a shelter and helped her find a new apartment she could afford. The WATCH Project also helped pay the costs to restore damaged furniture

Success Stories

and clothing. Emergency rent assistance allowed Daunette and her daughter to move into a new apartment before the semester ended.

Daunette lost her textbooks, uniforms and the equipment required for participation in her practical nursing program in the fire. While Daunette contacted the community services Lois had helped her identify, Lois contacted the head of the nursing program at CPI to advocate on Daunette's behalf. She arranged to have a uniform waiting for Daunette when she arrived at her clinical site, along with a stethoscope and textbooks to replace the items she lost. The program also helped Daunette with tuition, textbooks, internet access, mileage reimbursement, uniforms, shoes and equipment required by the LPN program. Daunette received assistance to renew her clearances, complete a CPR course and pay licensing fees. WATCH provided Daunette with a tutor when she struggled with a challenging medical surgical course.

Daunette also took advantage of several WATCH-sponsored activities designed to help participants find employment. She attended a cohort meeting where information about resume writing, cover letter preparation, references and job search techniques was provided. Lois Dodd met one-on-one with Daunette to review her resume and job search strategies. She also participated in an employer panel event where she met local health care employer representatives who described their expectations and shared job application and interviewing advice.

Shortly after graduation from the LPN program in December 2013, Daunette's employer offered her additional hours as a graduate nurse until she passes her National Council Licensure Exam and receives her certification. Daunette is preparing for the exam, and is excited to be using the nursing skills she learned to help older Pennsylvanians. She explains, "I always wanted to live a comfortable lifestyle with my family and with the help of the WATCH Project, I can do so. I can have a job in a profession that is always needed." Daunette is making plans to continue her education while she works as an LPN. Her goal is to become a registered nurse.

Success Stories

Monica at College of Menominee Nation

Nursing Career Ladder CNA to RN

Prior to her involvement with the [College of Menominee Nation's \(CMN\) Health Profession Opportunity Grants \(HPOG\)](#) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance, Monica worked as a Direct Service Provider (DSP) offering one-on-one support to adults with mental health disabilities. Monica held this job for a number of years in Chicago before moving to Green Bay, where CMN is located, and continued in this same employment after her move. Monica has three young children and is a single mom with very little local support.

Monica was working as a DSP when a co-worker told her about the certified nursing assistant (CNA) program at the College of Menominee Nation. Monica was interested and wanted to become a CNA to increase her skills and job opportunities, which would also increase her wages and ability to better support her children.

When Monica went to CMN to learn more about the CNA program, Stephanie, the Student Support Service Coordinator (SSC) was her first point of contact, introducing Monica to the program's nursing opportunities.

During her CNA training, Monica received a lot of support from CMN's staff. When Monica purchased a plane ticket for her mother to fly to Green Bay to help care for her children while she attended the CNA class there was a mix up with the start date and the class for which Monica signed up. Deb, the program's Career Ladder Project Coordinator, arranged for Monica to still take the class during the time she had anticipated by getting her enrolled at a different campus. Stephanie, Monica's SSC, also worked closely with her to decrease the financial strain of attending classes by providing support for daycare and transportation expenses. CMN staff's words of encouragement and motivation also helped Monica keep moving forward. Monica would not have been able to participate in nor have been successful without these supportive services from CMN.

During her second semester, Monica moved into the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program. There, she worked with Amanda, the Job Specialist, to find a CNA job. Amanda helped Monica

Success Stories



with resume writing, interview skills, the job search, and the application process. CMN also gave her a uniform after she received her first pay check!

Monica now works in healthcare as a CNA and completed the LPN program in May 2014. Monica works about 28 hours every two weeks, giving her enough time to focus on school and earn an income. Her life is busy, juggling work, school, and raising three children, but she has the support of her parents and the CMN program. Monica's self-esteem has greatly improved during her time in the program, as she can provide for her children and knows they are proud of her. She is setting a positive example for them and looks forward to completing the LPN program and taking her licensure exam in the summer. She then plans to move to Texas to be closer to her brother and work as an LPN to gain practical experience. Ultimately, her goal is to go back to school and become a registered nurse. She knows getting that degree will give her unlimited options for a long, successful career in healthcare.

Success Stories

Bessie at Community Action Partnership of Tulsa County

CareerAdvance®

Bessie was a single mother of three children barely making ends meet and working 60 hours a week in a pawn shop. Three years ago, she met and married a wonderful man who encouraged and supported her in continuing her education. With the benefit of this support, Bessie began to see opportunity around her.

Bessie first heard about the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project, funded by the Office of Family Assistance, when her daughter, Samantha, began attending the Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Tulsa's early childhood program. The HPOG program at CAP Tulsa is called CareerAdvance.® When it came time to enroll her younger daughter, Aariel, Bessie decided to apply for the CareerAdvance program. She was accepted into the Allied Health portion of the program in May 2013 and began working on pre-requisite courses at Tulsa Community College for radiography and sonography in August 2013.

CareerAdvance® supports Bessie's continuing success by paying for her tuition and books for pre-requisite courses. They also provide her with emergency gas cards to ensure she can always get to class. Bessie reports that, "one of the best parts of CareerAdvance® is the support that I have received from my cohort members and my career coach. My career coach played a great role in my CareerAdvance® success."

The Career Coach model at CAP Tulsa helps students achieve academic and personal goals. The coach facilitates weekly meetings known as "partner meetings" for the CareerAdvance® participants. These meetings bolster the cohort-based approach, provide support, and create networking practice and opportunities. The career coach also connects participants with on-campus resources to lessen the intimidation of beginning school and ensure participants have everything they need to succeed. Bessie specifically noted that her career coach showed her

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the writing and math labs, and how to use the TRIO¹ Student Support Services program available on the Tulsa Community College Metro Campus.

Building from this early success, Bessie applied for the radiography program in January of 2014 and was accepted in March of 2014. She began her first radiography class in June 2014 at the Tulsa Community College Metro Campus.

¹ The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>.

Success Stories

Alex at Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.

Health Program Opportunities Grant Healthcare Training Program

When Alex first applied to [Cook Inlet Tribal Council's \(CITC\) Health Program Opportunities Grant Health Care Training program](#) funded by the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants \(HPOG\)](#) program of the Office of Family Assistance, he found out he was going to be a father for the first time. Though his family was eligible for public assistance, and relied on that support, Alex was hired as a full-time gas station attendant and was no longer eligible.

Alex had always wanted to be in the healthcare field. He thought he'd make a good certified nursing assistant (CNA) because he'd taken care of an aging relative as a teen. In addition to his own aspirations, Alex was now a young father and he wanted to make a better life for his growing family. When Alex came to CITC HPOG he was unsure how he would pay for school to pursue his dream. Fortunately, when Alex went to apply for cash assistance he was told about the HPOG program and applied to participate in August 2011. He attended the CNA orientation and job shadow requirements orientation meetings, and his application was selected for the Winter 2012 CNA training. Alex did very well in the training and completed all the necessary requirements to become a licensed CNA, but soon hit a roadblock that nearly derailed his progress. The Alaska Board of Nursing would not license him based on findings from his criminal background check. A mistake from Alex's youth had caught up with him and threatened his future. Alex would not be allowed to take the required National Certification Licensure Examination until he satisfied all inquiries from the Alaska Board of Nursing (Board). CITC helped Alex respond to and address all concerns of the Board. Alex credits the encouragement and guidance from CITC staff with keeping him going and not losing hope.

Alex was also grateful to CITC's HPOG program for tuition assistance. The tuition dollars provided by the program made it possible for Alex to pursue his dream of being a CNA. With his background check cleared, and his state license in hand, Alex is now working closely with a CITC employment specialist to begin his new career as a healthcare professional. He also has another child on the way and he is confident that his CNA training will help him provide a

Success Stories



better life for his growing family. As Alex stated to CITC – “**GunalchÈesh**” which means “thank you” in his Native Tlingit language.

Success Stories

Sarah at Eastern Gateway Community College

Project HOPE

Before enrolling in the licensed practical nurse (LPN) program at [Eastern Gateway Community College](#) (EGCC), Sarah was a self-employed home health aide. “While I was working, I also attempted to take classes at the local community college to complete pre-requisite classes so that I could apply for a nursing program,” she explained. “It was hard going back to school, due to the fact that I had dropped out of public school and finished high school through a mail-in type private school. This structure was certainly not helpful in preparing me for college classes.”

After the birth of her son, Sarah started to worry about providing a stable environment for her family. “I was unemployed for four months, and not long after my son’s first birthday, I enlisted in the Army National Guard,” she said. “Upon arriving home and getting settled, I worked at a military post for a while until my orders were up; leaving me, yet again, unemployed. While drawing unemployment, I decided to go back to school for my LPN.”

Sarah wanted to find out more about [Project HOPE](#), an Eastern Ohio based [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance, after speaking with a number of EGCC students.

“I kept seeing some of my classmates having a paper signed after every class,” she said. “I eventually asked what they were and was told the signatures were to confirm attendance for gas cards offered as an incentive through a program called Project HOPE. Being a single mom living off unemployment and the GI Bill, I decided to look into HOPE. I could use all the help I could get. I spoke with my instructor, followed the flyers up the hallway and met with a student coach.”

Sarah said that throughout her first semester, she relied on Project HOPE for gas cards and incentive points. “HOPE helped me purchase my clinical uniform but beyond that I didn’t really seek further assistance,” she explained. “However, half way through the first semester things in my personal life took a turn for the absolute worst. Feeling as though I had reached my wits end, I met with my coach one day to get my gas card and at that point I finally sincerely responded to the question Pam (Project HOPE Coach) had asked me a million times before –

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'Is everything okay?' Through tears I told her that I was quitting the program. I felt as though I [was predisposed to failure] and life was just kicking in as usual to knock me off my feet."

That's when Sarah realized Project HOPE could provide more than financial support. "Pam provided the shoulder I needed to cry on," she said. "She also set me up with counseling services and I began to speak with a counselor over the phone. If not for the unconditional support, I'm certain that I would have given up. Pam also set me up with a girl in my class who tutored me and because of this, a study group was formed. We would all hang out after our monthly HOPE meeting and go over anything that I needed to touch up on."

Upon graduation in May 2013, Sarah's student coach and job placement specialist constantly relayed information on local job postings. "Project HOPE assisted with resume building and career counseling," she stated. "Pam was available to walk me through the whole thing. A couple of the other coaches set up a 'mock interview' to test out our interview skills. I really took a lot away from the interview and learned that I was ready to take on the process. I was confident in my abilities to become a successful LPN."

Sarah is currently working full-time as an LPN with a company that provides total care to individuals in a group home setting. "I have worked there for eight months and find everyday a welcomed challenge," she said. "I've decreased my student loan and credit card debt by half so far and my personal life has dramatically improved. I am completely off all types of state assistance and have since become engaged. I have a savings account that actually has money in it. I feel confident. I feel worth something and it radiates throughout every aspect of my life. For the first time, I am truly happy."

"I am planning to apply for the LPN to registered nurse (RN) transition program," she said. "It certainly worries me because I'll have to cut back on my hours at work and spend another year buried in text books and all the stress that comes with it. However, I feel as long as Project HOPE is still available at EGCC, then I know I can push through."

Sarah will never forget the backing she received from Project HOPE. "The support I received not only kept gas in my car so that I could make it to class, it provided me with a family that cared about my success," she stated. "I'm now a valued nurse, a better mom, a confident soldier, and best of all, I'm comfortable financially and emotionally."

Success Stories

Denise at Edmonds Community College

Creating Access to Careers in Healthcare (CATCH)

For six and a half years, Denise has been a working single mom to three girls. While working as an employment specialist she was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to quit her job to recover. After her cancer treatments, she returned to that work, this time supporting adults with disabilities. But due to budget cuts at her employer, Denise lost her job and was unemployed for several months, unable to find work in a lagging economy.

Denise knew she wanted to go to school and was starting the process of applying for financial aid. She was discouraged to learn that financial aid was not available for short-term programs and she would not be able to afford a nursing assistant program. A friend told her about the [CATCH program](#) at Edmonds Community College, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Denise saw CATCH as an opportunity to help get her on the right track.

Denise's major barriers to success were access to childcare and reliable transportation around the Lynnwood, Washington area. Through a partnership with the Basic Food and Employment Training (BFET) program, CATCH was able to connect Denise to childcare services for her daughters. CATCH also assisted with bus passes and gas cards to help Denise get to externship locations away from bus lines. To help assure Denise's financial stability, CATCH staff helped her get a part-time job with student services on campus. Her hard work and positive attitude brought her better positions and more hours.

At one point during the program, Denise received an eviction notice when her rental was sold to a new owner. The CATCH resource navigator helped her contact several community agencies but they were only able to add her to the section 8 waiting list. Denise found a smaller and reasonable apartment for herself and three children but it required first and last month's rent and a deposit. With her part-time job, she was able to pay the deposit and last month's rent, but was short the first month's rent when she received a three-day notice from the

Success Stories

landlord. CATCH partnered with another community agency and together promptly paid her first month's rent.

Though she struggled, CATCH staff helped Denise stay motivated. With a team of people working to help her keep positive and tackle one crisis at a time, Denise always had a place to go for support and help navigating available resources. Denise also saw how her hard work and success at CATCH had driven her children to do well in school.

Immediately after completing two certificates in the CATCH program, Denise entered the [Everett Community College](#) Medical Assistant Associate Degree program. Even though she was experienced in employment placement, the CATCH employment navigator helped her build confidence and brush up on employment skills such as job searching, resume writing, and interviewing. Since she continued with her part-time employment on campus, Denise volunteered her time to assist in the classroom with other CATCH cohorts.

After Denise exited the CATCH Program, she continued to work toward her medical assistant degree. The CATCH program kept her focused and she learned a lot about herself. She discovered how much she already knew and how her new skills could be combined with her past experience. Through her experience in the CATCH program and witnessing firsthand the opportunity it gives individuals to have a fresh start, Denise discovered where she belonged. When a classroom support position for CATCH opened in early 2014, she quickly applied. The Health Sciences Dean praised Denise as the perfect fit for the position and she was hired.

Now, Denise has two exciting pathways for advancement. She is continuing her healthcare education while she works at the CATCH program. She is preparing to continue her education in healthcare management. Denise is confident that her positive energy and go-getter attitude will help her overcome barriers. Though she sometimes struggled, Denise remained positive, living by her motto to “show up to the game and play.”

Success Stories

Brandon at Full Employment Council

21st Century Healthcare Works

Brandon came to the [Full Employment Council](#) (FEC), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance in 2013 to seek assistance for healthcare training. He was a single dad receiving public assistance and working part-time cleaning houses.

Due to his limited income, Brandon and his son lived with Brandon's mother, since Brandon couldn't otherwise pay his expenses. He realized his current job did not provide enough income and he needed to find a better way to support his family. He had been interested in the medical profession for a long time and began to seek out opportunities in the medical field.

Brandon went to the FEC's Northland Career Center to begin the intake process and take the necessary assessments for a medical training program. The first step was to assess his math and reading skills and Brandon received one of the highest scores ever recorded at the Northland Career Center. Based on this information, his counselor recommended that he pursue a nursing degree. Because of his family's financial needs and concern about not working for a long period of time, Brandon instead chose to enroll in the certified nursing assistant plus (CNA+) program, which would allow him to complete training in a shorter period of time and get back to work sooner.

Brandon was selected to attend the CNA+ program at Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley from which he graduated in December 2013. During his training, FEC provided Brandon with transportation assistance, books, and childcare assistance, which allowed him to complete the program without worrying about those costs and bearing those financial burdens. After graduation, FEC also provided Brandon with job placement assistance, which allowed him to obtain full-time employment as a CNA at a long-term care facility in Kansas City. According to his employer, Brandon is doing a great job and has excelled in his position quickly. His co-workers say he brings a positive attitude to the workplace and motivates those around him. His work experience thus far has been a positive learning experience and Brandon reports he plans to pursue an advanced nursing degree in the near future to better equip him to support his son and achieve his goals.

Success Stories

Ashley at Gateway Community and Technical College

Health Profession Opportunity Grant

Ashley is an overachiever. Her goal is to do the best she can. In high school she studied hard and did well, and she knew that college was her next step. As one of 13 brothers and sisters, Ashley is a natural helper. Finding a profession where she could help people was a priority. When Ashley began her studies she considered studying to be a nurse at [Gateway Community and Technical College](#) (Gateway) through its [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance. However, despite her best efforts, Ashley soon realized that nursing was simply not a good fit for her.

Soon after Ashley began her studies at Gateway, the college announced that a Human Services program (HMS) would be offered with funds from the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) project. Ashley heard about HPOG from one of the instructors in the Human Services program. Dr. Greg Stewart announced that HPOG had funds and wraparound supports for qualifying students. Initially, Ashley was unsure about her eligibility for the HPOG program, and what would be required of her if she was accepted. Ashley decided to apply with the encouragement of her mother and additional information from the case management staff. Ashley was the first HPOG student to enter the Human Services program. With the help of Dr. Stewart and the HPOG case management staff, Ashley knew she had found the program that could help her achieve her goals. Ashley looked forward to being a part of the human services program. She had found the right fit.

Once Ashley started the program, she stayed in touch with her case manager, Kylie Keene, every step of the way. Never afraid to ask for support, she reached out whenever she had an academic problem or personal issue that might have impeded her successful completion of the Human Services program. Kylie would see or call whenever she needed someone to talk to, to encourage her, or help her navigate through life's challenges as they arose. Ashley's relationship with Kylie was essential to her success at Gateway. As a participant in the HPOG program, Ashley also benefitted from financial assistance to cover the cost of classes, study skills workshops and tutoring, gas cards to ease commuting costs, and even emergency funds to purchase a new laptop when her old one terminally crashed. With the help of the HPOG

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program and Kylie, Ashley could succeed. Kylie always reminded Ashley that she didn't need to struggle alone, and she could do this.

Ashley was able to begin her career in human services through service learning and internship opportunities with agencies serving vulnerable families and their children. Ashley had so impressed the staff at the [Brighton Center's Child Development Center](#), where she had interned as an HPOG student, she was offered a permanent, full-time position in March 2014.

On May 15, 2014, Ashley attended Gateway Community and Technical College's commencement. Not only did she receive her associate degree, she also received the Outstanding Human Services Award. In May, Ashley was prepared to take the social work assistant exam to receive her credential. Ashley encourages any student interested in an allied health career to check out HPOG at Gateway. Dr. Greg Stewart, one of Ashley's human service instructors noted, "she has been extremely professional in her placement experiences in agencies and as a result has been an excellent trailblazer for future HMS majors at Gateway."

Success Stories

Alexis at Gateway Technical College

Health Professions Opportunity Project (HPOP)

Alexis has been working in food services at Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare since December 2008. She started there in her senior year of high school and has been working part-time (20 hours per week) ever since. When Alexis became pregnant three years ago she knew she needed to start on a new path and find a new way to care for herself and her child. Alexis enrolled at Gateway Technical College and began with general classes, but didn't really know what degree she wanted to pursue. She knew she wanted a job that would give her better options for the future and that's when she found [HPOP at Gateway Tech](#), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance. She eventually decided on the Medical Assistant program.

Alexis enrolled in HPOP after learning about the financial assistance that was available for students just like her. She was having difficulties with financial aid, and wasn't sure if she was eligible for additional aid to cover tuition and other school expenses.

She heard positive comments from other students enrolled in HPOP, and attended an orientation to hear what HPOP had to offer. By now, Alexis knew what she wanted to do, but just needed to find the resources to get started on her way.

Alexis came into the program motivated to finish. She really liked her instructors and what she was learning. Alexis met with her employment specialist on a regular basis while attending classes. The employment specialist gave her the encouragement she needed to stay on track and let her know she could succeed in this program. Alexis found that little things like getting instructor signatures for each class helped her stay on track and be accountable.

Through her employment specialist, Alexis received needed supports to keep her moving towards her goal. HPOP provided transportation assistance, case management, and helped her access other assistance while completing her courses.

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As she neared the finish line, Alexis met with her employment specialist to review her resume and begin searching for jobs. The employment specialist gave her confidence and was patient while they updated her resume, prepared for interviews, and helped Alexis with everything from dressing for success to following up after the interview. The employment specialist was wonderful, but Alexis also learned so much by networking with other students and hearing their stories and how they were initiating their job searches.

While in the Medical Assistant program, Alexis also attended Gateway Tech HPOP Evening of Excellence, a graduation celebration and employment networking event. During the event, Alexis was able to meet several local employers looking for new employees just like her – motivated, trained, and eager to begin a new career. One of the employers at the Evening of Excellence event contacted Alexis and offered her a full-time job.

Alexis now works full time as a medical assistant in pediatrics where she completed her practicum. As a full-time employee Alexis now earns many benefits that she couldn't before in her food service job. She has paid time off, health/dental/vision care, paid vacation, holidays, and weekends off. Alexis enjoys an 8:00AM to 4:30PM work schedule Monday thru Friday and knows she has a career that will support her and her daughter.

Success Stories

Michelle at Kansas Department of Commerce

Kansas Health Profession Opportunity Project (KHPOP)

Michelle is a single mother of four children who did not complete high school. She had been working two part-time jobs in an effort to make ends meet, but continued to struggle and knew she wanted something better. Knowing that her lack of high school diploma or equivalency was a barrier to her future success, Michelle initially sought support in GED completion with an eye toward potential healthcare training in the future. After Michelle completed her GED training, she visited the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas in Wichita. While there, she learned about training available through the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. The HPOG program in Kansas - KHPOP - was a great fit for Michelle because it was targeted to her goal of a career in health care and it provided support via financial assistance and crisis remediation. Michelle enrolled in the program and was provided supports such as:

- assistance with the cost of required uniforms,
- childcare so she could attend training, and
- rent and utility payments that stabilized her housing situation.

With the addition of these supports through the KHPOP program, Michelle was able to focus on her education, confident that her housing situation was stable and her children were safe. The ancillary supports created a unique opportunity for Michelle that allowed her to be successful when she otherwise may not have been.

Using these supports, and the rest of the KHPOP program, she now has a steady career in the health care field where she is earning \$11.00 an hour. Michelle plans to continue studying and working until she achieves her certified nursing assistant (CNA) and certified medical assistant (CMA) certifications. As she reflects on her journey into and through the KHPOP program, Michelle is grateful for the support and opportunities she has had. Michelle reports that “the future is bright” for her and her children.

Success Stories

Ashley at Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board

CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute

Ashley is an academically gifted, motivated, and insatiably curious student; however, her life's journey has not been without obstacles. While enrolled at Milwaukee Area Technical College's (MATC) Liberal Arts and Sciences Associate Degree program, Ashley was on her way to obtaining an Associate of Applied Science degree (AAS), when she became a single mother. Her world changed dramatically, undergoing a difficult transition from successful college student with excellent grades in rigorous science courses to managing multiple new and demanding roles. As a single parent and independent adult, Ashley worked full-time at McDonald's to provide for herself and her son. Having moved out of her mother's home into her own apartment, Ashley paid both rent and utilities on her McDonald's salary.

Determined to complete school, Ashley re-enrolled at MATC full-time. She was motivated to take on the roles of single parent, excelling student, and employee simultaneously, but her grades suffered and she was laid off from her job. Unemployment compensation was simply not enough to cover her expenses. She realized she needed to improve her circumstances and thought, "I may need to do this in a step-by-step fashion."

Ashley first decided to try and get an associate degree in nursing (ADN) at MATC to more quickly improve circumstances for herself and her son. Ashley is a bright, engaging, and ambitious young lady, with a passion for health care and the long term career goal of becoming a neonatologist. Ashley learned about the [CareerWorks Healthcare Training Institute](#) (HTI), at the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB) funded by the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program from the Office of Family Assistance, through her financial employment planner at the Wisconsin Works (W2) program. Knowing that a part of her MATC ADN training required completion of a nursing assistant course, Ashley took it upon herself to secure a referral to HTI and enrolled in a certified nursing training class during the summer of 2013.

HTI offered Ashley an enjoyable and professional environment, along with a wonderful coach and instructor. Ashley was an excited and enthusiastic participant in both her career readiness and nursing assistant training classes and successfully completed both. Ashley even came back to

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HTI to share her experiences with other participants and encouraged them to take advantage of the program's offerings – opportunities to improve both hard and soft skills as well as job search knowledge. Ashley encouraged participants to be motivated and know that HTI could help them improve their circumstances too.

Ashley worked with her instructor and coaches on proper interview etiquette and on how to create a resume and cover letter. As a result of her own determination, coupled with the job search assistance provided by the HTI, Ashley secured a job with Milwaukee County as a certified nursing assistant. In doing so, Ashley achieved a greater level of security, better pay, and benefits.

Before HTI, Ashley was on public assistance and working for minimum wage. Ashley currently works as a Milwaukee County employee making five dollars more an hour than she did before coming to HTI. She has also successfully re-enrolled in MATC's registered nursing program. Ashley is completely independent and no longer qualifies for public assistance. Overall, Ashley believes that she is a better woman and mother than she was before, and sees herself on a path to a brighter future.

Ashley hopes to eventually become a neonatologist and wants to own a non-profit organization that sails the African coast, helping those without access to health care. Aside from working, she is currently working on her BSN. There is nowhere to go but up from here.

Success Stories

Rebecca at New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health & Refugee Affairs

New Hampshire Health Profession Opportunity Project

Rebecca spent the past decade dedicating her life to serving patients in the healthcare field. She had some college education and worked in a variety of positions in health care, but had never received proper certifications. She's worked in the emergency room, in a pathology laboratory and then in IT, receiving on-the-job training. In January 2013, she was laid off from the healthcare software company where she had worked for two years. She was unable to meet monthly expenses and had to move out of her apartment. She was only able to keep her vehicle because it was 13 years old and paid off. Unable to secure new employment, Rebecca found herself, for the first time, at the unemployment office. Her employment counselor noticed Rebecca had a range of healthcare experience on her resume, but realized she would have a tough time obtaining employment without certifications. He suggested that Rebecca apply to [New Hampshire HPOP](#), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Rebecca could also take advantage of the free [WorkReady NH](#) training program. WorkReadyNH helps people who are unemployed by providing assessment, instruction and credentialing in key skill areas, including 'soft skills.' Rebecca completed the program and received college credit while earning a National Career Readiness Certificate.

Upon completing the HPOP application and screening process, Rebecca was accepted and assigned to a peer support group that allows HPOP students to work together in a cohort model to enhance workforce performance and the building of a professional network through personal development. Using a monthly community-based group meeting coupled with an online, interactive course component, the peer support group maintains a focus on participant-driven goals, teamwork and collective problem-solving skills. Participants are randomly assigned for participation in the peer support program.

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Rebecca enrolled in HPOP in August of 2013 and her top priority was getting to school so she could quickly get to work. In addition to participating in HPOP, Rebecca attended nursing assistant school while simultaneously taking pre-requisite classes for the registered nursing program at the local community college. During this time, she also met with her HPOP career advisor and attended workshops on professional networking and branding. She also attended a networking event where she met employers and other HPOP participants. She was a participant presenter at a Business Advisory Council meeting, where employers discuss healthcare issues and hiring trends. It was there that she first met a human resources generalist at the hospital where she would eventually become employed.

For Rebecca, the most valuable part of this experience has been having the support of the other participants. Rebecca states that participating in the peer support group program gives her “hope.” It makes it easier for her to envision her future and the success it may bring. She said it was motivating to meet others who were in similar circumstances and were working hard to succeed. Each monthly peer support meeting marked the progress of its participants, as they discussed their efforts towards meeting their goals. It was in these sessions where they learned the importance of peer support and developing a network of resources.

Rebecca was recently hired at a local hospital as a full time nursing assistant in the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit. She credits her success in finding employment to meeting people from Human Resources at the Business Advisory Council. When it was suggested that she might have succeeded on her own without HPOP, her response was, “perhaps, but the support of HPOP and other participants made the difference. It enhanced my level of confidence and made me believe in myself. The program offers so many opportunities for participants to enhance their education, interpersonal and professional skills. One only needs to take advantage of what is offered. Like anything in life, you will get out what you put into it.”

Rebecca has big plans for the future. She has applied for the nursing program at the community college and expects to hear whether she was accepted soon. Her ultimate goal is to become a nurse practitioner. She has expressed ideas about how to “pay it forward” with other HPOP participants and has offered to be a mentor to others newly entering the program. She would love to be able to help others learn how to take advantage of all that HPOP offers and would like to see every participant succeed.

Success Stories

Tauheedah at Pensacola State College

Pensacola State College Health Profession Opportunity Grant Program

Tauheedah has wanted to be a nurse for as long as she can remember. Watching her mom working with seniors in a nursing home, Tauheedah saw what nursing entails, which reinforced her desire to become a nurse. Her journey toward achieving this goal began in 2003 when she applied to Pensacola Junior College (now Pensacola State College) while visiting her uncle. Upon admission, she entered the Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) program in early 2004 and graduated in December of the same year. Rather than pursuing certification, Tauheedah immediately started working and did so for seven years without being certified in her field. However, changes in state requirements and laws meant that she needed to become certified to continue employment. After researching her options, she was advised that she would have to be retrained as a CNA to sit for the state board exam.

Further research about training programs led Tauheedah to [Pensacola State College](#), where she inquired about the cost of training and the first available CNA class. On a visit to the college, she was greeted by a pleasant admissions representative who advised her of a new Federally-funded program that was just starting – the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Tauheedah was referred to Inger Barnes, the project director, who interviewed her on the spot. Tauheedah was admitted to the first CNA class in June 2011. As described by Tauheedah, “Mrs. Inger and her staff at HPOG were and still are angels on earth. They were more than just there for me; they cared and were very supportive along the way.” Since entering the HPOG program in June 2011 to pursue CNA training and certification, Tauheedah has completed the Phlebotomy Technician program (May 2012) and the Licensed Practical Nursing program (December 2013); she lists the latter as her “biggest accomplishment.”

Tauheedah credits the HPOG Program and the staff at Pensacola State College with helping her reach her goals, particularly with regard to achieving her dream of becoming a nurse. As she stated, “the HPOG program has not only helped to make my dream, along with many others, a reality but the staff at Pensacola State College...were always there to listen, assist, encourage,

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inspire and even lend a shoulder to cry on when times got tough. I will not say that going to college is easy but I will say that with a great support system like HPOG...it is definitely worth it! I cannot express my gratitude enough to the HPOG Program and the wonderful staff behind it.”

Success Stories

Edgar at Pima County College District

Pima Community College Health Profession Opportunity Grant

Edgar, 59, is about to take the next step in his long-held dream of becoming a nurse now that he has completed the practical nurse (PN) program through [Pima Community College](#) (PCC). Once he passes his licensing exam later this month, Edgar plans to work as a licensed practical nurse and start taking the prerequisite classes for the registered nursing program.

Achieving this dream would not have been possible had he not been laid off in 2011 after a 20-year career as the manager of a printing company. “Things happen for a reason. Losing my job gave me the opportunity to go back to school and become a nurse,” said Edgar, as he reflected on the career pathway he is now following to achieve his long-held goal. Edgar struggled after the layoff, looking for another job, but could only find temporary employment.

If it weren't for family friends Edgar might still be struggling. Friends were visiting when Edgar mentioned that, for most of his life, he had dreamed of becoming a nurse. The friend's wife suggested that he go to the Pima County One Stop (PCOS) because she heard they had a program that could help him become a nurse. Edgar went to the PCOS office in early 2012 and was referred to an information session for the Pathways to Healthcare [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program (HPOG), funded by the Office of Family Assistance. At the information session, Edgar learned about the supports and assistance offered by HPOG and about the ISIS (Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self-Sufficiency) research study being conducted by PCC HPOG and Abt Associates. He agreed to participate in the study and was randomly selected into the HPOG treatment group in February 2012.

Edgar quickly began working with a PCOS case manager, who helped him prepare to enter healthcare training. Both his two daughters and older son had gone to college and his youngest son was attending PCC. His family talked with him about his decision to go back to school at his age, especially how challenging it would be. He felt that he needed to take advantage of this opportunity to fulfill his dream.

Success Stories

Pima College HPOG Staff recommended that Edgar follow the Pathways to Healthcare career plan by first pursuing a nursing assistant (NA) certificate, work for six months, and then begin practical nurse (PN) training, with the continued assistance of the Pathways program. Edgar started his NA program through the CareGiver Training Institute in April 2012, finishing June 2012. He quickly passed the Arizona State Board of Nursing NA certification exam and was hired in September 2012 as a certified nursing assistant (CNA).

While working as a full-time CNA, Edgar renewed his commitment to become a practical nurse, but had not yet achieved the assessment scores required to enter the PN program. His Pima College HPOG advisor referred him to a HPOG college readiness instructor who provided the tutoring and support that helped him achieve the necessary scores.

Having completed the NA certificate, Edgar received advanced placement into the PN program and started training in March 2013, with 12 months of full-time nursing instruction ahead of him. Throughout his program, Edgar felt that “there was a lot of help for me; every time I passed a module both Diana, my HPOG advisor, and Pam, my PCOS case manager, were always there. Because we all stayed in touch, it made me feel that they really cared about my progress and being successful.” Edgar graduated April 3, 2014, and after his graduation ceremony learned that his youngest son Ramon posted on Facebook that he was proud of his father and that his father was his inspiration. Having his son’s respect and admiration, Edgar knew his hard work was worth it.

“Without HPOG, I would still be struggling to find a meaningful job. It’s not just going to work; it’s finding something that you like to do,” Edgar said recently. “I was doing temporary jobs and there was no direction or a future. It was just something to pay bills. Now, I have a purpose and a vision of what I want to do in the future.” Edgar’s vision now includes continuing on his career pathway to become a registered nurse.

Success Stories

Shirldean at Hostos Community College

Allied Health Career Pipeline Program

Prior to enrolling in the [Allied Health Career Pipeline Program \(AHCPP\) at Hostos Community College](#), Shirldean was a certified home health aide (HHA) working for up to five various HHA agencies to make ends meet. She worked an average of three to six hours at each agency, making between \$8 - \$10.35 an hour. To improve the quality of her family's life, Shirldean began researching training programs for higher-paying allied health occupations. Interestingly, a lead came during her son's graduation from high school, which was held at Hostos Community College. As she leafed through the graduation program she saw an advertisement for AHCPP at Hostos Community College, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) funded project by the Office of Family Assistance. Based on past experience, Shirldean was a little concerned as to whether the program would be more concerned with making money than with students' success. But, as Shirldean later learned, the AHCPP staff proved to be courteous, diligent, genuine and supportive beyond her expectations. Subsequently, Shirldean enrolled in the program's certified nursing assistant (CNA) training.

While participating, Shirldean benefitted from many of the included supportive services, such as examination preparation courses, tutoring, enhanced career-focused internships and job placement and retention assistance, all of which helped her increase her confidence to pursue her career of choice. Having noticed Shirldean's stutter and apprehension with individual and public speaking, AHCPP staff provided her with verbal coaching to increase her comfort with verbal communication, lessening the impact of her stutter on her ability to communicate. AHCPP program staff also placed Shirldean in two facilities that suited her skills and personality and provided her valuable work experience to help her further her career as a CNA in a nursing home setting. These placements were targeted to increase Shirldean's exposure to working in settings and with populations of interest to her, as well as to further her long-term career goals to advocate and be a registered nurse (RN) for the elderly. Shirldean has since graduated and become certified and today works at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale as a CNA.

In line with AHCPP's emphasis on encouraging participants to focus on long-term career goals, Shirldean received career and academic counseling for admission to Hostos' allied health career associate degree program. She is currently in the process of applying to Hostos Community

Success Stories



College's School of Nursing to pursue a two-year RN degree. In addition, she wants to continue to inspire new AHCPP Pipeline CNA students by serving as a peer mentor and student guest speaker, which will further enhance her public speaking skills. In Shirldean's words, her "life now is more stable financially, mentally and emotionally – even in the midst of new challenges."

Success Stories

Pas at San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc.

Bridge to Employment in the Healthcare Industry

Pas, a recent graduate of UEI College as a medical assistant, could not find work in her field of study. Short-term jobs and temporary employment at the local zoo and Goodwill Industries did not provide stability or utilize her medical training. Pas wanted to gain a second certificate in the healthcare field that would add to her skill level and provide additional credentials to find employment in her chosen profession.

International Rescue Committee (IRC), a refugee assistance program, provides navigation services for some clients of the [San Diego Workforce Partnership](#) (SDWP). IRC is one of many partners providing medical training and support services for the San Diego Workforce Partnership. IRC was instrumental in helping Pas along her journey to career success. They helped Pas enter SDWP's [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance. With the support of the HPOG grant she enrolled in the medical administration program at U.S. Colleges in San Diego and completed her training in February 2014.

Pas credits her success to the IRC staff that believed in her and helped her overcome personal obstacles. They also provided support as she began working in the healthcare job market. She was motivated by her desire to create a better life for her son and family.

Public Consulting Group (PCG) is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) CalWORKS program in Pas' geographical area of San Diego, CA. PCG provided Pas needed work supports like childcare and transportation. The HPOG Program, known locally as the Bridge to Employment Program, was able to help Pas by paying for training. HPOG also supported Pas with gas cards and medical scrubs after her CalWORKS cash aide ended.

Pas' job search activities started with seven appointments with IRC's job developer and the IRC job coaching staff. They provided help in developing a new resume and coaching on interview skills. Sophie, a job coach, connected Pas with a health care employer called Family Health

Success Stories



Centers. A connection was made with the human resource department where she applied for and was hired as a temporary referrals specialist.

“It’s amazing that my dreams of working in the medical field have come true!” said Pas. “I’m now employed full time as a referrals specialist at Family Health Centers getting paid \$12/hour – that’s \$2.50 more than my previous job! I’m now able to spend more quality time with my son,” she explained.

Pas will be working to obtain permanent employment at the Family Health Center and to pursue additional certifications to continue to advance her health care career.

Success Stories

Sam at Schenectady County Community College

SCCC Health Profession Opportunity Demonstration

Growing up in the Bronx as one of six children, Sam lost his parents at a young age. The tragedy of losing his father to violence and his mother to illness meant that Sam and his brothers and sisters would be raised by his grandparents. A blessing in disguise, Sam's grandmother (a registered nurse) and his grandfather (a pharmacist) did a brilliant job of caring for the kids while showing them, by example, the value of working hard at a career that you love.

When Sam's family moved to Albany, it was a chance for him to develop a plan that would lead him to his goal- a career in healthcare. Formulating this plan, with the help of his grandfather, Sam realized he had a long road ahead and a lot to distract him. Having dropped out of school, Sam had to start with getting his high school diploma, which he successfully did. He then had to explore what road within healthcare he wanted to take, so he took some college courses, completing the next step toward following his plan. In addition to exploring his career options, Sam had to continue to work so that he could help support his family.

Sam's next step would be to become a certified nurse aide (CNA), which would require training and of course, money to pay for his schooling. While exploring his options, a friend mentioned a free training program that was being offered in Sam's community that helped people achieve their employment goals in the healthcare field. Following that lead brought him to the staff at Albany Community Action Partnership (ACAP) – a community organization helping individuals become self-sufficient – whose support he largely credits with helping him enter the CNA program.

Sam attended orientation, intensive workshops and meetings with the staff of ACAP. "ACAP really felt like a huge support. They put a lot of time and work into me and it helped, it kept my head in it. They knew a lot that I didn't know and needed to learn." He was successful, he was on track, he was moving along with his plan. Sam was accepted into the CNA training program through [Schenectady County Community College's Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#)

Success Stories

(HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance and operated in partnership with ACAP. The program provides wraparound support to its participants by engaging both instructors and support staff to offer soft skills integration and case management. Sam received life skills workshops, case management, support services, examination preparation and tutoring, all of which were critical in helping him toward his goal. Sam also received career service workshops, enhanced career development and job placement assistance, which helped him enter the workforce. In addition, ACAP provided retention services during his first year of employment.

There were a few bumps, unplanned hiccups and unwanted distractions along Sam's journey. "There was a lot happening outside of class that I tried not to bring in with me every day. I looked at it like a job and I was there for that purpose." Including the loss of a brother, the fear of losing another brother to a violent lifestyle, the responsibility of caring for the health of two grandparents that took him in and raised him, and the constant pressure from friends and family to financially support them, Sam was working every day to stay focused and separate life from class.

Sam completed his training and after getting through all of the challenges he had faced, his nerves got the best of him during his clinical skills test and he did not pass. Failing to pass the CNA test had taken its toll on Sam and challenged his devotion to his plan. "I didn't even want it anymore, I was so frustrated." And the biggest challenge to Sam's plan fell upon him shortly after the test – his grandfather passed away. "It was hard; I mean he didn't get to see me do this. I got into this for him and my grandmother, and now he won't see it." Through the support of the staff both at SCCC and at ACAP, as well as the desire to be there for his grandmother in her loss, Sam decided he needed to finish. He had one last opportunity to take his clinical skills test. After a lot of hard work and study, Sam sat for and passed his clinical skills test. Today, Sam is a certified nurse aide, just like he had planned – and just like his grandfather knew he would be.

Success Stories

Tracy at Project HOPE

South Carolina Department of Social Services

Tracy is a 26 year old single parent. Growing up, her family did not put much emphasis on education. Her father completed middle school and her mother attended high school. She will be the first of her family members to complete college. She moved out on her own at age 18 with a one year old son, who is now eight. Prior to moving to South Carolina she lived in Detroit, MI where she attended Detroit Community College, but did not graduate. She moved to Columbia, SC upon securing a job at a South Carolina credit union, but was terminated after losing a set of keys. During this time, her living situation was unstable. She had no permanent place of residence and was living with different friends.

Tracy enrolled in [Project HOPE](#), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance, after applying for public assistance. A South Carolina Department of Social Services caseworker and a church member encouraged her to reach out to Project HOPE. The program seemed a good match for her interests in helping people, the health care field and her desire to achieve a secure future for herself and her son. Tracy always had the desire to be successful and sought opportunities for career advancement. The healthcare field, with its many career pathways, offered the chance to make her dream come true. Tracy was motivated to be the first in her family to complete their education beyond high school.

Tracy began training to be a cardiac care technician. Project HOPE staff helped Tracy learn to prioritize and helped her focus on the most pressing issues, one at a time, until she met her goals. Through her work with project staff, she learned to trust her ability to make good decisions, stay on course, and cultivate a good work ethic. After setting a goal, the Project HOPE retention advocate made sure Tracy stayed on course while making sure she met all requirements needed to complete the courses for her cardiac care technician training.

Project HOPE helped Tracy build her self-confidence by offering consistent encouragement while helping her access services to address real needs like child care, housing, transportation, tuition, medical needs, books and supplies.

Tracy benefitted from Project HOPE's job development assistance service which worked with Tracy on interviewing skills, resume writing and how to dress. The job development service helped Tracy secure a well-paying job that allows her to continue her studies. Tracy works at

Success Stories



Respiratory Diagnostics as an account manager where she sets up home sleep studies and billing for patients and insurance companies. She has been on the job for two years as of March 2014. Her short term goal is to be a cardiac care specialist and her long term goal is to be a respiratory therapist. She has successfully completed Cardiac Care, Medical Terminology, and Math courses and is currently working on the pre-requisites for Respiratory Therapy. Her employer has been very flexible and supports her continuing education and training. While continuing to work, she is taking two pre-requisite classes toward her respiratory therapy goal.

In May 2013, with job security and a steady income, Tracy completed a first time home-buyers program and is now a proud home owner! “My son is stationary now and is in one school district, where he will be able to maintain friendships that will last through his school years,” said Tracy. Tracy has made great strides in her life since moving to Columbia, SC. She is now a mentor for other Project HOPE students, showing them that they too can build a better life beyond public assistance.

Success Stories

Catrina at Southland Health Care Forum

Pathways to Health Care Occupations

In November 2013, Katrina came to the [Southland Health Care Forum](#) (SHCF), a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance, after experiencing a number of set-backs in her life. Her contentious divorce just finalized, she was in danger of losing her home and had not worked in four years. Katrina faced the daunting task of rebuilding her life and becoming self-sufficient.

Katrina's SHCF case manager worked with her to assess past educational achievements, current skills and vocational interests. This assessment indicated that Katrina had multiple barriers to employment, but had strong interest and aptitudes in the health care field. With the support and encouragement of a friend who had participated in a SHCF training program, Katrina enrolled in the Medical Assistant Program.

Katrina showed great enthusiasm and was ready for the challenges of learning new skills through SHCF's program. SHCF's support services were instrumental to Katrina's success. Their assistance with transportation, work clothing, books and supplies as well as work documents ensured Katrina's completion of the program. Another key to her success was the support and encouragement she received from SHCF's staff and instructors. Her SHCF support team was in regular, daily contact, recognized and resolved problems and was available at all times. This staff support continues today by email or telephone whenever the need arises.

Upon completion of the Medical Assistant Program, Katrina was referred to the Workforce Development unit to start preparation for a job search. Katrina began to receive job search assistance that included resume preparation, interviewing techniques, dress for success and job leads. Katrina obtained a position within a few weeks at a medical facility that provides supportive and recuperative care to senior citizens.

The training opportunities Katrina received through SHCF have helped her start a new life – a life where Katrina is both self-sufficient and confident about her future. Katrina next plans to get additional training and become a certified medical assistant and to one day receive additional training to work in the electronic health records field.

Success Stories

Keisha at Suffolk County Department of Labor

Project SCHOOL (Suffolk County Health Occupational Opportunity for Learning)

In May of 2013, Keisha came to the Suffolk County Department of Labor's Suffolk Works Employment Program (SWEPE) like many of the other women it serves: with shattered dreams and an indomitable spirit to succeed. In the six years before she went on public assistance, Keisha owned and operated a successful hair dressing salon in Brooklyn.

Hoping to create a fresh start, Keisha moved to Suffolk County with the expectation of starting a new hair salon in partnership with a family member. Unfortunately, the commitments made to assist in the start-up never materialized, and Keisha found herself broke and soon to become homeless, forcing her onto the welfare rolls.

The transition from being self-sufficient to having to abide by the welfare-to-work rules was bumpy, but after successfully negotiating the compliance process, Keisha was scheduled for an assessment appointment where she met with a Suffolk County Department of Labor counselor. To prepare for her appointment, Keisha visited local schools and explored vocational opportunities in healthcare, deciding that she wanted to become a medical assistant.

Keisha was prepared and clearly expressed her vocational goals, which impressed her counselor. She already had a high school diploma, good test scores, transportation and back-up child care. This preparation and her solid work history made sending her to vocational training an obvious choice.

Keisha took full advantage of the educational opportunities offered at Project SCHOOL (Suffolk County Health Occupational Opportunity for Learning). Project SCHOOL, one of the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) funded by the Office of Family Assistance, is administered by the Suffolk County Department of Labor (DOL). While enrolled in the Hunter Business School Medical Assistant Program in Medford, NY between May 2013 and January 2014, Keisha earned academic honors and achieved a 3.9 GPA. She was awarded the Perfect Attendance Award and was also elected as her class president to the Student Council. Keisha helped tutor other students and displayed the leadership qualities that she had developed throughout her life.

Success Stories



To complete the externship portion of her training, Keisha was successfully placed at a Lab Corp., a local blood testing lab in Sayville, NY. During this training, Keisha achieved high customer satisfaction ratings as evidenced by their completed feedback forms. When Keisha interviewed for a permanent position in February 2014, she brought copies of her customer surveys and was offered full time employment. Keisha is now working 40 hours per week, earns \$13.75 per hour and is on the road to becoming self-sufficient again.

Success Stories

Cynthia at Temple University

Health Information Professions

Cynthia graduated high school in 1974 with a [commercial curriculum](#) diploma, which provided her technical skills of interest to large employers at the time, such as typing, stenography, bookkeeping, and accounting. A few years into her career, Cynthia decided that she would enter the healthcare field so she decided to take a Medical Billing and Coding course but she was unable to sit for and obtain the certifications because she didn't have the money to pay for the testing. Cynthia was in debt after paying for the course, which did not include preparation or fees for the certifications. While having the training may have helped her find a job, it did not help her progress toward a career without the certifications. Working at the time as a payment processor, Cynthia was able to pay off the \$12,000 she owed for taking the course and to maintain her housing. But, when she was later laid off from her job due to outsourcing, she hit a rough streak and was evicted from her home and had to move into a shelter because she could not find another job.

While at the shelter, Cynthia learned about an opportunity for professional development through Career Link, Pennsylvania's resource system for linking individuals to workforce development and independent living services. Cynthia saw the opportunity as a means of obtaining training and certifications that would help her regain her professional and financial footing. Specifically, she learned about the [Temple University's Health Information Profession \(HIP\) program, Tier 1](#)² (operated under the University's [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) program funded by the Office of Family Assistance). Having been accepted into the HIP training in July 2013, Cynthia realized that she had a unique opportunity to participate in a training program that would help her begin a health care career with the potential for growth and self-sufficiency.

When asked what Cynthia got out of the HIP program, she mentioned the value of the mentoring component and how having a mentor made her feel good. She enjoyed the camaraderie of her classmates as they helped each other with the tougher coding modules. She also thought that Dr. Lo, the instructor, challenged her and made her do her best. She

² Temple University's Center for Social Policy and Community Development's Health Information Professions (HIP) program offers individuals five tiers of education and training opportunities — from entry level and advanced certification programs to Associate, Baccalaureate and Master level degrees — which prepare students for rewarding careers in Health Information Technology (HIT).

Success Stories



appreciated the open door policy of the staff and the supports that were provided such as transportation. Cynthia also valued the professional development support that was offered through the program because without it, she wouldn't have presented herself and her skills to potential employers in the best light.

Determined to get a job, Cynthia worked with HIP's career placement specialists consistently until she was accepted at a temporary employment agency. Six months after her training she was hired at Independence Blue Cross to work with electronic medical records. She now has full time employment and full benefits.

Since becoming employed, Cynthia has moved in with a family member and is contributing to household expenses. She also has a savings account and feels she can enjoy life, as well as establish longer term goals for herself. Her first goal is to own a home and the staff at HIP have directed her to a program offered by Habitat for Humanity to help her realize this dream. Cynthia also plans to grow in her profession by continually seeking out new educational and professional development opportunities.

Success Stories

Charlene at The WorkPlace, Inc. Health CareRx Academy

Charlene is a single mother with two sons. In May 2013 she started attending The WorkPlace, Inc.'s [Health CareRx Academy \(Academy\)](#), one of the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) funded by the Office of Family Assistance. She learned about the Academy in October 2012 after attending a workshop at Housatonic Community College. At that time Charlene was unemployed and feeling stuck. Based on what she heard at the college, she thought a career in healthcare sounded like a good choice.

She began setting and achieving training and education goals for herself. Charlene completed the Foundation Skills Workshop Week on May 28, 2013. The Workshop Week contextualizes basic training in healthcare and uses an integrated approach to support and nurture students. Topics include: motivation, health & wellness, work readiness, positive mental attitude, goal setting; goal action planning; self-esteem, stress management and customer service. After the Workshop Week, Charlene completed her 5-week training at Valley Medical Institute to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA) in August of 2013. That September, she began a 12-week training to become a patient care technician at Housatonic Community College that she completed in January 2014. Charlene attributes her success to the positive support and guidance she received at the Academy.

There were obstacles along the way and Charlene had to rely on public transportation since she does not have a driver's license. Sometimes it took careful planning and at other times, prayer. The workforce specialist at the Academy, Ms. Viviana Stevens, was there to support her and always made sure that Charlene was well prepared with a transportation pass and tokens.

Now life has improved for Charlene. She is studying to get her driver's license so that she will have more employment options and can more easily travel with her two boys. Importantly, Charlene landed a job as a part-time certified nursing assistant at a private agency. Even today, she incorporates some of the things she learned at the Foundation Skills Workshop Week. Charlene wakes up every morning with a positive outlook on life and stays away from negative people. She believes in herself and her two sons and that motivates her in her job search and her everyday work life.

Success Stories

Brandi at Turtle Mountain Community College

Project CHOICE

Brandi is a mother, a full-time student at the [Turtle Mountain Community College \(TMCC\)](#) and a participant in Project CHOICE, a [Health Profession Opportunity Grants \(HPOG\)](#) project funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Project CHOICE seeks to provide health career educational opportunities to TANF and other low-income students while simultaneously meeting local healthcare workforce needs. Through her involvement in Project CHOICE, Brandi is now dedicated to pursuing a career in the healthcare field.

Brandi has faced significant challenges in pursuing her education. She initially enrolled at TMCC in 2009 but ongoing substance abuse barriers prevented her from completing her education. After the birth of her daughter in 2010, she found a new sense of purpose and re-enrolled at TMCC, graduating with Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. Still uncertain of what career to pursue, Brandi returned to TMCC in January 2012 where she connected with Project CHOICE staff and learned about the College's Phlebotomy Program. In May 2013, she graduated with her 9-month Phlebotomy Certificate and continued taking classes towards becoming a medical lab technician (MLT). In December 2013, she completed an 18-week internship at the Presentation Medical Center, a local hospital in Rolla, North Dakota. In her words, this internship was "one of the most enjoyable learning experiences I have ever had. I can honestly say I love the career I chose and feel like it is what I am meant to be doing." In January 2014, she became a nationally certified phlebotomist, scoring 684 on her boards (a passing grade is 400).

Project CHOICE provided Brandi with the financial, technical and motivational support she needed to continue her progress towards becoming a nurse. In addition to helping make school accessible and affordable, Project CHOICE gave her the resources to manage some of the most challenging expenses associated with being a full-time student and parent – namely, daycare and transportation. Project CHOICE staff also provided Brandi with invaluable career guidance and emotional support. Brandi, in describing her participation in Project CHOICE and interaction with staff, said that "... you made my experience at TMCC so much better than I ever imagined and led me to the career I am meant to have... you helped me out with so much along the way."

Success Stories



Brandi graduated from TMCC in May 2014 with an Associates of Applied Science degree as a MLT. A testament to her hard work, she graduated with a 4.0 grade point average for her final semester. Following graduation, Brandi intends to take her boards to become a certified MLT. She is also in the process of moving to Grand Forks to continue her education at the University of North Dakota where she will begin working towards a Bachelor's Degree in the fall of 2014.

Success Stories

Alla at Will County on Behalf of The Workforce Boards of Metropolitan Chicago

Skilled Workers, Strong Earnings

Alla came to Chicago, IL in 1989 from Russia. At twenty-five years old, she was ready to start fresh in a new country. She had earned a degree from the University of Moscow in graphic design and was prepared to work as a designer. Alla found a job quickly and remained employed at the same company for almost twenty years. In May of 2011, however, she learned that she was being laid off. She was out of work for two years. Alla sought help from [Jewish Vocational Service Chicago](#) (JVS Chicago), a social service agency contracted with the [Workforce Investment Board of Will County](#) that helps people from all walks of life find employment.

Alla knew that the health care field offered opportunities with good job prospects. A pharmacy technician training program sponsored by the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) (HPOG) program, funded by the Office of Family Assistance, offered excellent options.

After an in-depth assessment process, Alla learned that she was accepted into the program. Lacking financial resources for the course was a major barrier, but through JVS Chicago's HPOG program, Alla's expenses related to books, learning supplies, state licensing and the national certification exam were covered.

In February 2013, Alla attended her first day of class and was motivated to learn. The course work was difficult and focused on areas that she had not previously studied, but she found the structure of the classes, such as weekly quizzes and math reviews, very helpful.

One of the most useful parts of the program was the externship that Alla had at the same time as her classroom training. Alla received real world experience as an extern at a retail pharmacy on the days class was not held. JVS Chicago and its instructors also provided Alla support and the opportunity to discuss on-the-job situations and problem-solving in a safe classroom setting.

Success Stories



Alla's program team also included an Employer Services Representative who helped her prepare for employment. She received help updating her resume and participating in a mock interview prior to completing the program. During the program, Pharmacy Technician employers were also invited to the classroom to present information about open positions and conduct interviews on site. Alla, along with her other classmates, interviewed and submitted their resumes to the hiring managers.

Alla completed 144 hours of pharmacy technician classroom training and 120 externship hours. Upon program completion, she had also received her state pharmacy technician license, had a date scheduled to take the national certification exam and was scheduled to attend a job fair near her home. When she attended the job fair, she interviewed and was hired as a pharmacy technician. In the summer of 2013 and while employed, Alla sat for the national pharmacy technician certification exam and passed. Shortly thereafter, Alla was offered a job at CVS/Caremark and is now working as a Dispensing Pharmacy Technician, with opportunities for advancement.

Recently, Alla applied to a physical therapy training program at a local community college and is waiting to hear of her acceptance. She plans to continue working in the pharmacy field while taking physical therapy courses. If not accepted, she plans to advance her pharmacy career by getting trained in sterile compounding and aseptic technique for intravenous preparation.

Success Stories

Julie at Workforce Investment Board SDA-83, Inc.

Professional Healthcare Opportunities-Careers and Support (PHOCAS)

Today, Julie is a registered nurse. An accomplishment, four years ago, she would not have thought she could achieve. It has been a difficult four years for Julie, but through hard work and determination, she is finally doing what she's always dreamed of: saving lives.

Julie first became interested in nursing during high school, when she participated in a local health education center summer program with her favorite teacher, Mrs. James. During the program she wore scrubs and visited a local hospital, nursing home and a few other healthcare facilities. This gave Julie her first taste of the healthcare field. One day she witnessed a patient "code" in the emergency room and watched a registered nurse (RN) spring into action: beginning compressions, skillfully grabbing the ambu-bag and other resuscitation equipment from the crash cart and starting up an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) all at the same time. Julie was captivated and hooked. She saw that RN as a "rescue ninja" and decided that that's what she wanted to be too.

Step-by-step, Julie got her licensed practical nurse credential. She worked for a while caring for the elderly and disabled at a nursing home in Monroe, LA. She enjoyed every minute spent with residents, but aspired to more, with that image of the RN imprinted in her mind. She decided she had to go back to school, but didn't have the money to do so. She had about an hour's drive to and from work every day and used most of her earnings to pay bills, groceries and gas. It was full time work. College meant more gas, less work time, tuition, books, uniforms and other fees ... all of which required more money. She didn't think she'd be able to pursue her dream until she heard about the Professional Healthcare Opportunities-Careers and Support (PHOCAS) program, one of the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#) funded by the Office of Family Assistance.

Julie went to her local workforce agency, applied for a PHOCAS grant and was called in to meet her program liaison, Mrs. Alice, a week later. Together they developed a strategy that would enable Julie to study at Louisiana Delta Community College in Monroe. In the Spring of

Success Stories



2014, Julie met her professional goal of completing her RN training and obtaining her certification with the financial assistance offered through the PHOCAS program. Julie considers the program a “Godsend.” She appreciated the support and guidance she received, including tutoring help on a particularly difficult subject.

The program helped pay for Julie’s books, gas, uniforms, tuition and cap and gown as well as the fee to take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) and other sundry expenses. With all this financial support Julie was able to decrease her work hours and spend the time she needed to study and get her degree. Thanks to the PHOCAS program, Julie now works in the emergency room at a local hospital. She’s a registered nurse, becoming the “rescue ninja” she was driven and enthralled by seven years ago.

Success Stories

Loraine at the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County

Health Careers for All

“I am at a character-defining moment in my life,” wrote Loraine in her 2012 application to the [Health Careers for All](#) (HCA) incumbent worker nursing cohort at North Seattle Community College in Seattle, Washington (NSCC). Having worked as a medical assistant for Country Doctor Community Clinic (Country Doctor) since 2003, Loraine felt strongly about advancing her career into nursing, both to fulfill her personal passion, and also to be a role model for her children.

As much as she loved being a medical assistant (MA), to Loraine there was always something special about nursing. “I do know that nursing is what I want to devote my life to,” she said, “because I want to make a difference in people’s lives and their health.” As an MA, she saw daily what nurses do and she felt that nursing was what she was meant to do. “I am very committed and dedicated to the mission to help serve the underprivileged,” Loraine stated. This commitment extended outside her formal job, as she has participated in church outreach to El Salvador and to Thailand, the latter to help build a school for children with disabilities and to work with street youth.

But over the years personal and family obstacles and responsibilities blocked that path. Loraine had tried twice to fit a nursing program into her demanding work and family situation, but to no avail. Coordinating completion of all the nursing pre-requisites within the accepted time span was a challenge. Arranging her work schedule to fit into the nursing program was another major obstacle. If she cut back her work hours, she was concerned she may not have enough money to provide for her three children. And being able to keep an employer satisfied, with the constantly shifting times of classes and clinical requirements, posed a unique challenge. To Loraine, the upcoming HCA cohort at NSCC, part of the [Health Profession Opportunity Grants](#), funded by the Office of Family Assistance, seemed like a program that could help address these obstacles. Loraine would be the first in her family to graduate from college. She was driven and motivated to demonstrate to her children and family that it could be done, to

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show that she could earn and save enough to provide for her children while participating in a full-time nursing program.

Even before becoming an MA, Loraine had worked in the membership department at the Washington State Nurses Association, and it was there that she heard first-hand from nurses about their struggles and their fulfillment in helping others. She has made this her focus for a long time – and that focus and dedication was clear to her employer, HCA staff, and the college staff that were all charged with making the selection of the final cohort members.

In spring 2014, Loraine completed the first quarter of the RN program (after six very challenging pre-requisite quarters). She has impressed all involved, despite the incredibly strict demands of this program. Loraine is exactly the kind of individual for whom the HCA program was designed. While facing previous obstacles, and certainly finding the current cohort academically challenging, Loraine will make an outstanding nurse and is a role model to her children and family.

In writing to HCA about all that the program did for her, Loraine stated: “My goal in becoming a nurse is far greater than any obstacles or challenges that come my way. Life is filled with road blocks and I am especially grateful for the HCA program’s hand in tackling the basics (e.g., set schedules, selected pre-requisites, wrap around support services, and mentor guidance); it has been great. This cohort has provided camaraderie and the spirit of friendship and community. Being together through established pre-requisites and now the RN program has helped us keep each other upbeat despite how difficult some obstacles can get.”

