

American Job Center, Dillingham Comprehensive Success Stories

YOUTH – (Amber-Foster-Fontanilla)

Amber enrolled in the American Job Center (AJC) Youth Program in February 2016. She was previously a student at Aiea High School but dropped out in 2015. She last attended school at McKinley Community School for Adults but did not finish because she was balancing a job as well. She sought services through the AJC Youth Program to help get her back on track with her education and employment goals.

From the start Amber showed that she was highly intelligent and was able to bypass tutoring services. She requested to work with HCAP and their CBase program to help her complete her diploma. She breezed through the curriculum, struggling at times with attendance, but was always able to refocus and get the job done when kindly reminded about her future aspirations. Having an interest in Culinary Arts, Amber chose to gain experience in that field and obtained a job with a local lunch wagon where she not only learned about the food service side of the culinary field, but management as well by being given the higher responsibilities of running her own food truck. She gained more than she expected and it opened her eyes to the various sides of the culinary field.

Amber also welcomed her child into the world in May 2017 right before her graduation ceremony with HCAP. She is keeping focused on her career pathway by obtaining a job with the Queen's Medical Center as a Nutrition Aid to assist in preparing and delivering meals to patients. With the help of her Youth Case Manager she has explored options of continuing her education with Kapiolani Community College where she is highly interested in their Culinary Arts program that has a Concentration in Food Service Management.

Amber has the intelligence and determination to succeed in anything she puts her mind to. Since having her child, Amber is more determined than ever and on her way towards a bright future.

YOUTH – (Irie Rico)

Irie, a bright 20 year old young lady with a whole lot of potential, was faced with the biggest challenge of her life: obtaining her diploma after dropping out of Pearl City High School few years ago. Poor attendance was a big issue which resulted in her falling behind in her work and affected her overall grade/credit. Unmotivated and with little desire to stay in high school, she dropped out with no diploma and didn't turn back. Until now.

Irie has turned her life around and is now pursuing her diploma. After hearing about the Youth Program from a friend, Irie was encouraged and motivated to make the initial call to hear all about the Youth Program. She signed up to attend the Youth Program Informational Briefing. She was hopeful about the support and services that the program provided but overwhelmed by the commitment and dedication she would need as she faced these new challenges head on.

So many doubts came to her mind. Can I do really it? Is this going to really work for me? Should I just keep working and try to get my diploma later? How is this all going to work for me and not against me? Am I going to be too tired to push through? And remember, Irie had not attended school for several years and would now need to attend CBase classes Monday-Fridays where attendance is a big requirement. This requirement is shared and emphasized throughout the eligibility process as well as her during her Foundation Skills Training Workshop which took place before she started. By showing up for class and doing the work, Irie embraced the possibilities.

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Although well informed of the requirements and the commitment, actually executing the daily routine for Irie has been difficult, but not impossible. Irie had several challenges to work through in order to attend classes. She was now a mother of a 2 year old, which meant the need to secure child care when she's in class, and she also had to rearrange her full time work schedule and communicate with her supervisor about her new class schedule. With the support of her family, boyfriend, and the Youth Program staff, she has pushed aside all of the doubt and is determined to stay focused.

It's been a few months since she's started the Youth Program but Irie's been able to take full advantage of the services and benefits by attending weekly workshops, excursions, and guest speakers as they've enhanced her experience of the program. With no out of pocket expenses, the program has been able to fund her books, supplies, and tests which she is very thankful for.

It has been rewarding for both Irie and her family that she's been able to flourish in the Youth Program. She has dreams of becoming a neonatal nurse and caring for premature babies. With every step she takes in class, she's closer to her dream. With every effort she makes, there is no doubt she will achieve her diploma. We celebrate her lighted path and applaud her every step of the way.

WIOA DW – (Russell Elisala)

Due to the rail transit construction, business was slow at the restaurant that Russell worked at as a Cook Manager for almost 11 years. The restaurant eventually closed. He had been working as a cook there for the past 15 years and decided that it was time to focus on a career change.

He was receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits and decided to enroll at Honolulu Community College in the Sheet Metal and Plastics Technology program. Finding the financial support to attend college can be challenging. However, Russell qualified for WIOA Services under the Dislocated Worker program because he lost his employment through no fault of his own. Also, he was unlikely to return to his previous job.

On May 12, 2017 Russell graduated from Honolulu Community College with an Associate in Applied Science Degree in Sheet Metal & Plastics Technology. The sheet metal union has contacted him and Russell has completed their preliminary testing and application process. He was also offered an apprenticeship with Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard as a sheet metal mechanic and has accepted the offer. He will begin employment on September 18, 2017 after he successfully passes the required physical and psychological tests and completes a security clearance.

So thankful for the support that he received, Russell willingly volunteered to be interviewed by the federal monitors from the US Department of Labor. This was his way of thanking Oahu WorkLinks for helping him with his training which has increased his skills and enabled him to obtain employment where he will be valued and improve his life financially.

WIOA ADULT – (Alan Nohara)

When the talk is about success, the name Alan Nohara comes to my mind right off!

Mr. Nohara came in to Oahu WorkLinks in the middle of April, 2016 seeking financial assistance for the CDL course he wanted to take at Leeward Community College. He was incarcerated for drug possession, released in 2015 and is currently on probation. Although he had been going

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through a rough transition in his life, Alan always maintained a positive attitude. He has rehabilitated himself and, since his release, he's turned his life around for the better.

Alan has been living and helping his elderly mother and secured employment with Speedi Shuttle, working part time but with full time hours. He was grateful for his job, but made the decision to study for and obtain his CDL to achieve more in life. He went to Leeward Community College and inquired about the CDL course; that's when he found out about the WIOA program. He came in and was interviewed by an Employment Consultant (EC) and attended a briefing session on April 21, 2016. Alan was an eligible Adult participant and started attending courses at Leeward Community College. Alan's EC has had the pleasure of seeing him strive for success in all his classes. Alan consistently stayed in contact and was always conscientious of informing his EC of his progress and how appreciative he is to the WIOA program for the chance he's been given.

Alan passed his written and driving tests and achieved his dream of acquiring his CDL certificate. He applied for a CDL driver position at the Hawaii Food Bank which was advertised through the AJC and was hired right away. Of course, he immediately called his EC to share the wonderful news! Alan's EC shared: "It has been a humbling experience working with Mr. Nohara, seeing him go through all that he has had to undergo to where he is now."

When his EC called to ask Alan if he would be able to come in to do an interview, even with such short notice, he dropped everything and rushed over. In his own words, "I knew I had to come as I wouldn't be in the position I'm in now had I not had WIOA's assistance. I had to, and I told my boss I have to do this!"

WIOA ADULT – (Diana Ronquillo)

Diana was already enrolled at Hawaii Medical College and was in the process of obtaining her Clinical Medical Assistant certificate. Her goal was to obtain employment in the medical field and become self-sufficient. As a married mother of two children, she needed a stable job in order to provide for her family. Her husband is visually impaired and works part-time at the Arizona Memorial Vending as a cashier/stock person. They are currently living in a HUD low income apartment in Chinatown. Diana has experience working as a caregiver since 2012 and is currently working at the Hawaii Kai Retirement Home as a certified nursing assistant. However, she did not have the certifications required to advance in the healthcare industry.

Struggling to pay the remaining balance of her tuition so that she could complete her training, she came to Oahu WorkLinks to request tuition assistance. She applied for WIA/WIOA, met the income requirements for the adult program, and was enrolled. Maintaining a GPA of 3.50 and above, she received awards for "Outstanding Achievement" and "Perfect Attendance". As part of this program she became a Certified Phlebotomy Technician. On March 26, 2017 Diana graduated and received her diploma. On April 1, 2017 she passed the National Healthcareer Association exam and obtained her certification as a Clinical Medical Assistant.

She is very excited about this accomplishment and is currently looking for work. She is persistent in finding and pursuing all opportunities. When talking to Diana, she demonstrates sincerity, compassion, perseverance and integrity. With her genuine passion and unrelenting dedication, she truly will be an asset to the healthcare industry. "I am forever grateful for the assistance and opportunity that Oahu WorkLinks afforded me".