



Family Speak

February 15, 2018

Lansing, Michigan



Michigan Association
of Community and
Adult Education

Michigan's
Children

*Public policy
in the best interest
of children*



16888 Trinity, Detroit, MI 48219 (313) 532-8404 www.sienaliteracy.org

January 11, 2018

Hi, good morning, my name is Janet Skinner.

I never thought that I would go back to school. In high school, kids teased me about my learning disability. Six years ago, I had Guillen Barre and had to relearn how to walk and talk, and I lost some reading skills. Two years ago, I was diagnosed with cancer. I had major surgery and chemotherapy, which made me very weak and sick all the time.

Early last year, I brought my niece to Siena to learn how to read better. I noticed how nice it was, and thought maybe I could take classes too. I didn't know that there was a school I could go to and learn to read without being judged.

At the learning center, I do reading programs on the computer. They taught me how to use a computer and now I can use my laptop at home to do more computer work. My tutor, Carolyn, is teaching me to read, spell, use vocabulary words, and I'm even learning how to write now. My daughter used to read me all of my mail, but now, I'm reading my mail more by sounding out words. This has helped me because I am more independent.

The tutors and the staff are amazing. Each and every person I've met here has been helpful, kind, and really cares about the students. The tutors sacrifice their free time to help the students learn, and they are always trying to improve the program. Everyone is so friendly, and I love to be here because I don't feel stupid.

Last summer at the honors ceremony I received the Rising Star reward. I never thought I would ever get a reward for school. The ceremony was wonderful; there were many people here and I felt so proud of myself. I haven't felt that way in many years.

It is so important that these schools stay open, so people both young and old can learn reading, math, and other skills. We need programs like this one so people like me have a chance to learn.

Thank you for letting me share my story.

Ms. Janet Skinner

Effective January 1, 1994, the Internal Revenue Code requires us to acknowledge your contribution in writing and to state that we provided no goods or services in consideration of your gift.

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Adult Education

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Good Morning,

Four years ago, I was known as the unwed, teenage mother, dropout from a small town. I was not known for what I had accomplished, who I was as a person, what I could become, or what I had to offer. People referred to me as the unwed mother dropout, which is not the only thing I am. I am a strong mother who has accomplished a degree, a career, and raising a child all at the same time.

My senior year of school I decided not to go back, I was pregnant and worried about how the school would react. Sadly, it was not the other students I was worried about; it was some of the teachers. Their degrading behaviors made me feel upset and left my self-esteem at an all-time low. I felt like I failed everything and that my life would not amount to anything.

After leaving public school, I tried an online school program, but it was not for me. I did not have the want nor drive to do the program. Eventually, I left the online program and decided to go back to work. I had a few jobs but without a high school diploma, my family and I were hardly making it. I set out looking for other options, ways to improve my life and myself. Finally, I was introduced to an Adult Education Program - a place where adults, like me, could have a second chance.

Before starting the program, I was almost certain it would take three or more years to finish school and I wasn't sure if I was ready to commit to that. When I signed up I was assured as long as I set my mind to it, I would be out of there before I knew it. I was given the power of my own education. They had a confidence in me and therefore I gained a confidence in myself. I also gained skills I use every day at my job, where I now am able to support my family.

My first class was in summer 2016. The teachers were encouraging, helpful, and went out of their way for us. I spent hours on homework, I trained in phlebotomy, I worked part time, I mothered 24/7 and sometimes I cried. However, in summer 2017 I proudly walked across that stage as a member of the National Honors Society and earned my diploma. Adult Education changed my life for the better and I will forever be grateful for the opportunities I was given.

Life just happens and sometimes people need to put their education on hold. It may be because of family issues, money issues, or even teen pregnancy. Everyone has a reason for leaving school. Adult Education programs help those who have left school but still wish to chase their dreams.

There are many cases where people stop believing in themselves because no one believes in them. At Adult Ed, the teachers and staff are 100% dedicated to their students. Life is hard, let alone for those who haven't had the opportunity to gain their high school diploma. Adult Education programs need your support because they support us. Without the Adult Education programs there is nowhere for Adults, like myself, to turn.

Thank you



Novi Community School District

Career Preparation High School

<http://www.novi.k12.mi.us/ms/>

25345 Taft Road, Novi, Michigan 48374 (248) 449-1717 • Fax (248) 449-1719

Hello, my name is Luis Calzada. I would like to start by telling you about myself. I came to the United States when I was 7 years old. In Mexico, I was one of the top students in the class with mathematics, history and pretty much anything else.

That changed when I came to the United States, because I had to learn to speak English while in the third grade. I was unable to keep up and I did not even know how to say, "I have a question" however, I was able to learn.

Although I always felt like I was behind everyone else in English class, I felt normal in math, science, art and physical education. However, I did not draw attention to myself because I was not the top of the class or the troublemaker I became invincible like many others.

When high school came so did more problems as they do with every teen; things like where do you fit in? I admit I was a bit much to handle. By the time I realized it was too late to catch up I fell too far behind to graduate on time. I left my school and looked for another option and I learned about Novi's Adult Education program. So, I applied and started attending school.

I remember the first day of class thinking that I was going to be in a room full of troublemakers. However, as the days went on, I learned that each student had a personal story and that they were at Novi, because they did not fit in at their high school or their school dropped them because they had to drop out because they needed to support or help their family financially.

However, at Novi Adult education, the focus is not just about school and graduating. It was a place where everyone supported each other. It was like a family. For example, if one of us needed transportation we would call each other. The teacher would try to help with anything they could and I am thankful for that because they made me push myself to be better.

By the time I was going to graduate, they had helped me find an internship program with Comau, an international robotics company. I was getting my citizenship and I was going to school and working all at the same time.

After I graduated, I received a scholarship to enroll in a pilot training program in PLC programming and robotic technician. Thank you to Novi adult education for teaming up with Michigan Works to help me find a way to further myself. That is why I feel that schools like this are important. It gives people another chance, another hope to better ourselves, and better the people around us. That why I am speaking today to help someone else have another chance just as Novi Adult Education gave me. Thank you.

Developing Each Student's Potential with a World-Class Education

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Lora E. Stout, Ed.D.
Director of Community Education, Grants,
& Professional Development

My GED Journey

Hello my name is Stephanie Stapleton.

I'm 27 years old, and this is my journey.

I come from a family of six: 3 brothers and 2 sisters. In the beginning my father was always trying to better his career and education to support our big family, so we traveled a lot, due to his job opportunities.

Over my childhood, I went through a few elementary schools over three states from Ann Arbor MI, Washington State, Ohio and Redford MI. The furthest I can remember is barely getting thru 5th grade in Redford Twp. Then I was pushed into middle school. Between tough years, my mom and dad got a divorce. It took a toll on all of us. It was long battle; every day was like carrying an enormous amount of weight around. I had no passion, no drive. Teachers barely knew me. I had no friends to keep me going--just bullies. Yet I had to try harder then everyone to just to catch up. I felt though I had no chance, and school made me feel worthless and stupid, proving to me every day I had no chance. It seemed every book I read, I didn't have the mind to read and remember what I just read. Math was impossible to even look at.

Soon my attendance had dropped drastically. I didn't want to face the bullies and my teachers. My grades showed no improvement, so the principal called for a meeting with all my teachers and the social worker at the school. I couldn't even tell you what happened at that meeting. I had the biggest anxiety attack. I left bawling my eyes out. My mom said she would home school me, but I never saw a shred of school work. She was already swamped with her own school. She was going to community college part time at night. She also worked a full time job. For months I just sat at home, watching TV, playing on the computer, knitting and crocheting.

Every now and again I would speak to my siblings and their friends. One day my sister's best friend brought over a friend, and we would hang out and play games. Our friendship grew from there.

Before I knew it, we were hanging out every day. Weeks turned to months; months turned to years, and we had moved in together.

We're making tomorrow!

Our life together had brought our first baby boy, Jerry Jr. the 3rd. We were not happy with our living arrangements, so we found an apartment. Funds were tight living off my fiancé's income and state aid. We barely got by, but we made it work. Just after moving in, we had news of another little one on the way: another little boy, Zackary Wayne. The joy was overwhelming but with children comes stuff - lots of it! As if our apartment wasn't small enough, it was about to get smaller. So with some time, we looked for a new place, and in that time, we found friends through my fiancé's work. They came over on weekends to watch movies, play games etc.

With time we found a home to rent for the right price, moved in and got adjusted to the bills. We found that we could do this, but when the kids get older, we won't make it. So I started job hunting. I had no diploma or GED. Right there I hit a wall. What do I do? I spoke to my fiancé and he knew some co-workers who could get my foot in the door. Before I knew it I was a cashier, part time. It was fun for a while. The nights were quick, but I began to realize I was not a people person and I should not work in retail. The income just wasn't worth it.

I then reached out to friends, talking to them about how I wanted to go back to school and try to get my GED. We just couldn't afford some programs to get my diploma with 4 mouths to feed. I soon found one of our friends, pointing me to the Walled Lake Educational Center, where they had classes for the right price to help me achieve my goals.

My mind thought of reaching the once unthinkable. Shortly after I was signed up and taking the test to start the classes to take the steps to pass the test, and I have been growing every day. Math has become my favorite and my motivation to keep going. I find myself getting 80% on most tests. I hope to take the test before this spring, although reading and writing are not my strong suit. I feel as though the teachers in this program will give me the right tools to achieve my goals, to push forward and keep me motivated through my journey.

When I pass the test, my journey will not end there. I hope to go on to animal behavior college to train dogs to help the handicapped achieve everyday tasks that we need to do to get through life. I may also want to work toward being a neonatal nurse to work with preemie babies in the NICU, and help them get strong so they can go home and be babies who grow up to get an education to one day get the diploma and or G.E.D.

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Family Speak Story: Angela

When I was a kid I lived in Vietnam. I couldn't afford to go to school. My mom was a single mom with 11 kids. We had to divide into 2 groups – one group went to work and the other younger kids went to school. I was in charge of watching my younger siblings. I could not go to school in Vietnam. I only finished 5th grade in my country.

I was 21 when I came to America. I went to work in Detroit working for a company doing industrial laundry. It was at this time that I also went to ESL classes at night to learn English. So now that I lived in America, I could no longer depend on other people. It was important for me to learn English. I went to ESL classes on-and-off for about 8 years.

I learned how to read and then decided to go to beauty school and I obtained my cosmetology license. I got a job at a salon, but it was a lower salon like Fantastic Sam's or Great Clips. After working as a hair dresser for a while, I realized that it was important for me to have a job with benefits. I also wanted a better job – like an upper scale salon which requires a GED.

There are so many reasons that I want to get my GED. I want to get my education. I never had high school in my country. I like coming to the GED school. If you have any questions, the teacher is right there to help you. I am half way done now. My plan is to finish my GED by summer.

After I finish my GED I am thinking about going to Oakland Community College to take some classes and continue my education. If I never took the GED I would never make enough money to take care of myself or have benefits. Through the couple years of taking GED classes, I have met others who have similar events in their lives. We all benefit from this education and can get better jobs for us and our family.

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Hi,

My name is Joanna Perez. I am 31 years old and I have 6 children, I am Mexican American. I dropped out of high school when I was 16 years old. I was pregnant with my second baby girl, my father did not have enough to take care of the family. So I dropped out and started working to help out at our home. My father has always told my sisters and I that he came to this country for his family to have a better life, so his children can have a good future, a great education. I was a teenager when he told us that, I didn't pay attention to that, I didn't realize that I would need an education in the future. Now that I have my kids, a family of my own, I see what my father was trying to tell us when we were younger. My life has not been easy, not life is easy, I have had many jobs, factory jobs, and I've worked 8 ½ hr shifts. I would come home tired; there were days where I did not get to see my kids because I was working so much. My children are my life. I got sick of working so much for so little pay. I always wanted to be something in life, didn't have to be something super big or someone super important, but something good enough to get me away from the life of stress I was living. I always tell my children, you can be whatever you dream to be, as long as you believe in yourself and finish school anything is possible. You can have visions and dreams about what you want or how you see yourself, but to actually be living it is something different. I believe in myself. I want a better future for my children, for me. I know I can prove to myself and to others who do not have faith in me that I can do this. The journey has not been easy, I am only half way but I will not stop until I achieve my goal and be where I know I can be. I need my kids to know it is never too late to get an education, will it be easy – no, but worth it – absolutely yes! Never give up on a dream, you keep going no matter how hard it gets, because the pain you feel today will be the strength you feel tomorrow. Getting my GED is only the beginning for me, I plan to continue my education, hopefully down the road become an LPN, a licensed practitioner nurse, and who knows possibly an MD- the sky is the limit! Behind you are the challenged you have gone through, before you lies new possibilities. Today you choose the direction in which you want your life to go!



Washtenaw
Community College

**Adult Transitions
GED Pathways Program**

Good Morning Everyone,

My name is Beth Feldkamp. I stand here today as product of Adult Education Programming.

My difficult journey with education started very early on, I missed a lot of school and was charged with truancy twice. The first time in third grade and again in the fifth grade. Struggling through a difficult childhood with many other things going on, education was never put as a priority, making it very difficult to progress. My dad, although always employed, is illiterate. I look back and think that this had a large impact on why he did not stress education. Before I knew it, I was a high school dropout and a single teen mother working at unfulfilling jobs just to pay the bills.

After working for the same company for a decade, I suddenly lost my job. The mistakes I made as a teenager- dropping out of high school were coming back to haunt me. Undereducated and now unemployed, I felt hopeless and out of options. However, with three children, giving up was NOT an option.

One night as I was telling my daughters how important it was for them to go to school and get an education (as I often did), I realized it wasn't right for me to ask them to do something I had not accomplished myself. I knew I needed to make a change. It was not only important for me, but for my daughters and for their success.

On the verge of turning 30, I contacted the Washtenaw Community College Adult Transitions Pathway Program to enroll for their next semester. As I am sure you can imagine, after being out of school for 12 years I was extremely nervous. Returning to school was scary and a tad embarrassing. That was, however, until I was in the classroom. The entire staff; my teacher, counselor and the program manager believed in me, as they did for all of the students in the program. They showed me that anything was possible; not just by teaching me the skills I needed, but by helping build up my confidence and that changed my relationship with education. This was the first time in my educational journey that I felt supported and I began believing in myself.

When I say that the Adult Education programing changed my life, I truly mean it. I was able to finish my GED, and go on to become my family's first college graduate earning a bachelor's degree in Social Work from Eastern Michigan University with high honors, and then going on to earn my Masters in Social Work from the University of Michigan. This is not to say that I did not encounter barriers throughout my journey; but the academic foundation and skills I had learned in the Adult Education program helped me persevere.

Returning to school, modeling the importance of education and allowing my children to see me work hard gave me a larger impact with my children than I imagined. The opportunities did not only open up for me, but for my children as well. This past year my oldest daughter graduated from high school and is now a freshman in college, and my middle daughter will graduate this year and is still undecided regarding where she will attend next year. I not only earned my GED but I have changed the generational cycle of education for my family. My educational journey is not quite over yet, I am now planning to pursue a PhD.

ONCE YOU LEARN TO READ, YOU ARE FOREVER FREE.

— FREDRICK DOUGLASS



DOMINICAN LITERACY CENTER

DOMINICAN LITERACY CENTER
5555 CONNER SUITE 1414
DETROIT, MI 48213

Hi, my name is Charlotte Willis. I'm a student at the Dominican Literacy Center. I'm 62 years old and when I went to nursing school in the 80's it was not mandatory to have a high school diploma. I went to nursing school and I was a nurse for 18 years.

I'm a photographer and I do video work. Whenever I wanted to learn something I would go back to school. I wanted to get a degree in digital media, so I applied to Specs Howard to learn digital media. When I applied for the course I did not know that it was mandatory that I had to have a high school diploma. So, I had to find a place that would help me. Just think, someone my age starting over, going back to high school. That's when someone told me about Dominican. They have been a life saver for me. The teachers are great. They provided me with a tutor for math and they have taken their time with me. Now I am one test away from getting my GED.

Dominican is so needed. There are people out there that need this program. Adults that need to get their GED. The teachers at the Dominican Literacy Center have and can help adults to take a great step in their lives. They are changing lives.

Impact Partner



Member Agency



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— FREDRICK DOUGLASS



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When I first came to the Dominican Literacy Center, I didn't know what to expect. I hadn't been to school in a very long time, so I was very nervous when I started attending. Surprisingly the class was small and intimate enough that I didn't feel awkward or out of place. I was very happy about that. Another thing I like about the program is every teacher/tutor that I have, has patience with me and makes sure that I understand what I am learning that day before I leave.

Now I never really liked school, but there's something about coming here every other day that makes me feel like I can do this. I've been to other schools and they basically provide a place for you to study, give you some books and a calculator and say "let me know if you need anything". Not at Dominican, everything is explained to everyone in the same way, and I like that. I like this program, it not only gives me confidence that I will pass, it gives me the hope that I can continue on to college. Thank you.

Thomas Johnson

Impact Partner



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25345 Taft Road, Novi, Michigan 48374 (248) 449-1717 • Fax (248) 449-1719

Good Morning.

My name is Rosy Reyes. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today about something very important to me and to my family and to many others just like me, each with their own stories. I am proud to have the chance to tell you my story.

I came to this country from Mexico when I was 17 years old. I wanted to complete my education in my country but it was very difficult because I had to help my parents financially, which meant that I had to leave school at a young age and get a job. I decided to come to this country with some of my older brothers and sisters, but leaving behind my mom and dad was very difficult. Once I got here, I wanted to do something good so that I could help my family, but I was too young to work. I decided the first thing to do was to learn English. I started attending a school for adult education but it was not right for me as I was the only teenager among many older adults. Instead, I enrolled in high school. I am proud to say that I was doing well in high school but unfortunately, for family reasons, I was not able to complete my last semester and never received my diploma.

Ever since that time, I have carried in my heart the desire to finish high school. In part, so I could move up to other things but also because it was a promise I made to myself. But I got married and had my children – the oldest one I am proud to say is a United States Marine – and for the next 20 years, I was not able to finish high school. For many years, I looked for a school that would offer me a diploma and I am so grateful that I finally found Novi Adult Education. After speaking with Linda at the school, I felt such happiness when she told me that I could one day walk across the stage and receive my diploma. I cried with happiness when I heard this because it was what I always wanted and it was an example for my five kids that it is never too late to fight for what is important. With the amazing and patient help and support from the teachers at Novi Adult Ed., I completed the program and have been that good example for my kids.

Now that I have my high school diploma, I am able to take a course through the University of Michigan to become qualified as a medical interpreter. This will allow me to help other Hispanic people who may not have been as fortunate as me. And all of this is thanks to the opportunity given to me by the Novi Adult Education program and its

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wonderful staff. I hope that this program continues to be supported and funded by the State of Michigan so that many others, like me, can be given a second chance to fulfill their dreams, to improve their lives, and to be able to help others do the same.

Thank you.

Developing Each Student's Potential with a World-Class Education

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Maria Hoebeke

Hello, my name is Marie Hoebeke, I live and work in Lapeer County and I want to thank you for this opportunity to tell my story.

As my children were growing up, I always stressed the importance of education. I wanted them to do well and the job market was getting more and more competitive. I was constantly harping on them about how good grades would help them get into college. I always felt like a hypocrite when I yelled at them or punished them for bad grades, because I knew I did not finish myself. I left school midway through my senior year of High School, to have my oldest son.

The first time I asked my husband how he felt about me going back to school, was in 2004, and I was talking about going back to high school. It was late summer and I had stopped at the Adult Education program to get more information about a graphics class. When I spoke to the program manager, she told me the class was \$400. I said, "Oh, wow, that's too much. I can't afford that." Then she said, "Wait, did you finish high school?" Not that I wanted to admit it, but I said, "No, why?" She went on to tell me all the reasons I should attend Adult Education including taking the Graphics class free.

I had always wanted to finish school. Deep down, I was afraid....of failing *again*, but I decided I wanted a diploma. In the fall of 2004, I went to the school to sign up. I was nervous. I had been out of school for over 25 years. It took me a while to get over my fear of failing, but once the first semester was over and I received my grades, I was fine.

I graduated in 2006, the same year as my son Joey. At graduation, I gave a speech about education and its importance at any age. I sat down and had such a feeling of accomplishment. Now I could look my kids in the eye, my mom was so proud, my husband was beaming and I was DONE.

Alternatively, so I thought. I was being called back up to the stage, and was presented with a two year, full ride scholarship to Mott Community College. I was speechless. In all honesty, I did not intend to go any further, but I also did not intend to tell my kids I was turning down a free education. Not after all our discussions. I graduated from Mott in May of 2008 with a 3.9 GPA.

By then I had been going to school for three and a half years and I figured I only needed four more semesters for a Bachelor's. I applied to Ferris State University and was accepted into their Criminal Justice Program.

Six days before classes were to begin, a parent's worst nightmare, my oldest son passed away unexpectedly. He was 28 years old, I was devastated.

Everyone told me I should take the semester off; that I needed time to grieve. I looked at my family and decided I could not do that. I wanted my children to know that when something bad happens, you don't get to chuck everything and quit. I did not want them to think that was the way to handle tough times. So I went to school. I cried all the way there and all the way back every day for the first couple of months. I needed the distraction. However, mostly, I needed to set an example for my children; so I continued.

The summer between my junior and senior year I did an internship at the Prosecutors office in Lapeer County. I found that I loved being in the courtroom, hearing the cases, and watching the trials. It didn't matter if it was civil, criminal, or juvenile matters, I loved all of it. I graduated in 2010 Suma Cum Laude.

I asked my husband, again, how he felt about me going to school. He looked at me like I was nuts. I'm not going to lie, I felt like I was nuts. I was talking about going to Law school. I would be starting at the age of 50. If I went full time, I'd graduate when I was 53.

I have been working as a lawyer now for three years, and my favorite part is helping others. My hope is to be able to continue helping people who can't afford to help themselves. My husband's hope is that I make enough money to make my student loan payment.

There's a reason I went back to high school, there's a reason I'm here. I don't know where I'll end up, but I know I'll be helping people who need me.

This program has truly made a difference for me and my family. I didn't plan to be a lawyer; I was just a mom who wanted to be a good example for my kids.

There should be no age limit on education or dreams. On behalf of myself and future Adult Education graduates, I want to thank you for your past, present, and future support of Adult Education.



PlainwellCommunitySchools

Today's Learners Tomorrow's Leaders

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Family Speak Event

February 15, 2018

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Fax: 269.685.9742

Starr Elementary

601 School Drive
Plainwell, MI 49080
Phone: 269.685.5835
Fax: 269.685.2027

Community Education

422 Acorn Street
Plainwell, MI 49080
Phone: 269.685.9531
Fax: 269.685.1564

Adult & Alternative HS

422 Acorn Street
Plainwell, MI 49080
Phone: 269.685.1573
Fax: 269.685.1564

District Web Site:

www.plainwellschools.org

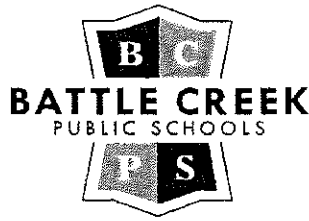
Hi, my name is Jessie Finch, and I am a recent graduate from Plainwell Adult Education's Hastings campus. I am here to tell you my story and to explain to you why I believe adult education programs provide wonderful opportunities for adults, including myself, and allow us to achieve the great goal of earning a high school diploma. Adult education programs provide adults with a second chance to finish their education.

As a high school student, I always had so much going on in my home life. I was the student who needed to work to be able to afford things that every high school student "needs." Work became more important than school. Then during my senior year, when I was 19 years old, I was in a horrible car crash, which changed all of my plans. I spent months in hospitals and rehabilitation, and I missed the opportunity to finish high school and graduate with my class. I had to put everything on hold for at least two years, because I had so many appointments and surgeries. Attending school and finishing my classes was not an option at this time in my life.

After I had recovered enough from the car crash, I began to try to get my GED. I was 23, had a child, and I decided that I needed to change my goals and plans. As I was working through this process, I decided that I needed to attend a program to help me study. I began to attend classes at Plainwell Adult Education's Hastings campus. I learned that I could earn my high school diploma, so I started on this path.

I finished earning my diploma this past fall, and I am now a graduate of Plainwell's Adult Education program. They are patient and they gave me a second chance and helped me achieve my goal. I have also gone on to get my CNA certification, and I plan to take college classes and become a nurse.

Adult education gave me a second chance at my education. I was able to achieve my goals and to create a better life for my family. Thank you for letting me share my story with you today.



ADULT EDUCATION

77 Capital Avenue NE - Battle Creek MI 49017
Tel. 269-965-9514 Fax 269-965-9545

My uncle told me about the ESL program in Battle Creek. He told me that program is very good if I want to find good work opportunities. I wasn't sure what I wanted or what to expect about the program but here I am. The ESL program gave me opportunities to speak in a different stages and learn about different situations, and, why not, I am learning American culture and other cultures too because in ESL the students come from all countries around the world.

Before I came here I could say some words like dog, cat, hello, sugar, and cook. I didn't know how to use these words in sentences and phrases. I have been here two months in the BCPS Adult Ed ESL class. Thanks to the program I am learning the differences between "you mean..." and "you are mean", or "those trees are beautiful" and "those three are beautiful". Maybe these phrases are very simple for people who know English language but it isn't for people who speak other languages.

Now I don't need to translate as many of my words in a computer because I am learning to write, speak, and read in English, not perfect of course because I have some differences like my accent. As my skills improve then I will be able to read many books and understand them. It's so important to me because I want to and can learn more about the world. But listening to and understanding what other people say is more important. In our ESL class we have listening exercises and we practice conversations.

I learned some things about the English language when I was studying during my early school years. So I had some basic information for understand it. For entry into ESL class I had to take an exam and I wanted to know my English level. It's important because all the students have different experiences with the English language and in the program they help us to see our strengths and difficulties and get us over them.

To tell the truth I know about the difficulties in living in a new house, in a new country, on a new continent. Everything is different and anyone coming to the U.S. wants a friendly hand to help them understand the new world around them. All of us need some services if we want to live well: doctors, work, credit, opportunities, houses, food, etc. New arrivals wouldn't have these services if they don't have tools for looking and finding these options. It is important to people like me living in Michigan to have the free ESL program, a friendly hand to provide tools to improve our chances of being successful citizens. So thanks to the state of Michigan, all of the others programs that are here to help adults, and Ms. Kim.

Juan Baron-Grillo

Pride. Performance. Potential.