

TANF SUCCESS STORIES

Suzette Roberts

Setting Her Sights Higher

Suzette Roberts of Mena, Arkansas, became a participant of the Work Pays program through the Polk County DWS office in July 2009. Her case manager was Jeannie Meadows. Suzette came to the program as a single parent without childcare or transportation, which made it difficult to maintain stable employment. She was employed with McDonald's but unable to make it to work at times. She had been very reliant on her family, and seemed to lack the motivation to become self-reliant. Suzette had the knowledge and the ability to excel, but needed guidance and encouragement. With mentoring and encouragement from her case manager, Suzette was able to set attainable goals.



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Within six months of employment with McDonald's, she was promoted to shift trainer. She utilized childcare vouchers through the TANF program to provide this

much needed assistance for her son, Hunter. Suzette became eligible for the Vehicle Down Payment Assistance, and received help with her auto insurance. Upon meeting some of her goals, she began to realize that her potential to attain a career and not simply a job would soon move her beyond minimum

wage. Suzette was hired by the Tyson Company, increasing her income with the promise of promotion. Currently, she doesn't rely on childcare assistance as she is now meeting this expense on her own. Suzette's future goal is to become a supervisor at Tyson. ■

Susan Mann

Turning Her (and Her Children's) Life Around

Susan Mann first came to the DWS office of Garland County in May of 2010, as an applicant of the Work Pays Program. She was a mother of four with only one of her children in her custody. She shared her life struggles with Case Manager, Jeannie Meadow, and said she was ready to turn her life around. Her struggles had made it almost impossible for her to maintain employment, a stable residence, and the ability to care for herself or her children. Susan admitted that she had surrounded herself with people that contributed to her problems and promoted an unhealthy and unstable lifestyle.

Susan has accomplished a great deal in a short period of time. She now has a stable home, and has gained custody of her three remaining children. She began work with Accent Marketing and received raises for her job performance. Her short-term goal is to become a supervisor with Accent. In the long-term, she hopes to become a counselor helping those that suffer with debilitating problems. She has aspirations of attending college to attain the education needed to become a counselor. Susan has overcome many obstacles in her journey to become a self-reliant individual, free to raise her four children and continue to be a positive and productive member of society. ■

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Angela Leon-Vargas

Managing a Brighter Outlook

Angela Leon-Vargas has successfully completed 19 months on the Work Pays Program, thanks to the help of Jeannie Meadows of the Garland County DWS office. Meadows served as Work Pays case manager for Angela, who came into the program as a single parent of four children. Some of the barriers that hindered her from retaining stable employment were a lack of dependable transportation and childcare. In addition, Angela had a terminally ill parent she was caring for with no support system in place.

One of the goals she wished to attain was attending college to further her education. She is bilingual and has the desire to become a translator. Angela had gone through a string of jobs that provided her with a paycheck, but none to help her build a career. With the Vehicle Down Payment Assistance Program, she was able to purchase a Dodge Caravan in July of 2009. The supportive services of Work Pays assisted Angela with childcare vouchers so that she could maintain a steady work schedule. She has now become employed as a manager with

Angela now has plans to attend classes at the National Park Community College in Hot Springs, Arkansas.



Primary Home Care of Hot Springs, an assisted living facility that provides care to the elderly residents of Garland County, Arkansas. Her employer has expressed that Angela is an outstanding manager. Angela now has plans to attend classes at the National Park Community College in Hot Springs, Arkansas. ■

Sherry Lake

New Workers are like Family

When Sherry Lake came to the Paragould DWS Center, she worked with Case Worker, Tammy Smith. Sherry had recently migrated to Arkansas from Mississippi with her two children, ages 11 and 14, and moved in with her mother, who had only a two bedroom apartment. Sherry also had to rely on her mother for transportation. She had little work experience because she had spent most of her time as a stay-at-home-mom. Sherry's last job was as a bartender in 2004.

While living in Mississippi, she received a certificate for medical assistance, but never used the training. However, Sherry shared with her case worker that she wanted to further her career in home health. She successfully completed the home health train-

ing with Area Agency on Aging in Jonesboro, but was never called for employment. She chose to look for work on her own, but was not able to find it.

The Paragould DWS Center offered a number of services to the client, including mileage reimbursement and clothing for work. The center was also able to obtain an (OJT) position at the local Holiday Inn, where Sherry was hired as a housekeeper, and was promoted to a floor leader within a short time. DWS collaborated with the Arkansas Northeastern College's TABE program, and the Holiday Inn, who offered her an OJT position.

Sherry's case has now closed and she continues working at Holiday Inn as floor leader, saying that Holiday Inn has become a family to her. She loves her job and the people that she works with. She has now moved into an apartment of her own with her two children. When Holiday Inn remodeled, they gave her hotel furniture to help furnish her home. ■



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Brian Gray

Hardworking Father, Husband Finds Rewarding Career

When Brian Gray came to the Paragould DWS Center, he had lost his job due to a disagreement with his supervisor. Brian, however, has a great work background. He is married and the father of three children. After coming to the DWS Center, he signed up with the TEA program, and Tammy Smith became his case worker. Following her advice, he applied to go to school through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and majored in Mortuary Science at Arkansas State University-Mountain Home, the only ASU site offering Mortuary Science.

Other TEA supportive services included mileage reimbursements, clothing for work, and payment for the Hepatitis B shot required for his apprenticeship. Collaborative partners included the Arkansas Northeastern College TABE program, and the Arkansas Rehab Services Educational Services. The Mortuary Science classes included a large number of on-line and teleconference classes, and Brian recalls that he quickly learned that being late signing onto classes meant that he was counted as absent for that class. Though

he completed his first year successfully, Brian found it difficult to locate a funeral home to complete his internship. The problem was that most of the funeral homes in the area were family-owned and operated.

Thanks to efforts by Tammy Smith and the Paragould DWS Center, Brian was eventually placed at a funeral home in the area. His early assignments were mostly picking up deceased bodies. He was also taught the art of proper procedures in preparing a body for burial. Brian has graduated from mortuary school and is now employed in two different funeral homes. He is also now again enrolled in college to further his education, including completion of training for plumbing and inspector for the instillation of heat and air units. ■



Kristie Monroe

Future RN and Model Client

Kristie Monroe came to the Paragould DWS with a number of challenges, including her lack of employment and lack of childcare for her three-year old toddler. She expressed a desire to take certified nursing assistant training. She was also interested in finding employment while completing her nursing degree so that she would be better able to care for her child.

The TEA program provided childcare, mileage reimbursement, and funding of her CNA training. Her childcare supportive services were continued after she was employed. Other supportive services included providing the TOOLS Program at Arkansas Northeastern College (JCB) while she waited for her CNA classes to begin. She completed her Career Readiness Certification, did her COMPASS tests and was instructed in creating resumes to reflect the position for which she would be applying. She was also instructed on how to dress and how to conduct herself during job interviews. Kristie worked in WEX (work experience) at Mission Outreach, and said it was a good experience to

help others less fortunate. She said she would like to continue to volunteer her time occasionally at the mission.

After completing CNA training, Kristie took a job at a Jonesboro nursing home. During that time she also applied for other jobs in the area and was called for an interview at the Arkansas Methodist Medical Center. She accepted that position, and at the same time entered her first year of the nursing program at Arkansas Northeastern College. Ms. Gretta Witcher, her case worker, says the nursing instructors described Kristie as a great employee, and they are confident that she will be successful in obtaining her RN degree in 2012. Kristie continues to work at Arkansas Methodist Medical Center, and remains in school working toward her goal of becoming an RN. According to Witcher, “Ms. Monroe was an easy TEA participant to work with. She has used the TEA program to become self-reliant.” ■

Ashley Beard

Future Educator Finds the Support She Needed

Ashley Beard is a single teen parent of two children, ages 21/2 months, and seven-years old. She stated that her challenges to employment included her need for childcare, a need to complete education, and a record of under employment. At the time she came into the DWS Center, Ashley was a senior at Mar-maduke high school, and was scheduled for graduation May 2011. She maintained good grades and her progress reports were always good.

Ashley had a real desire to complete her high school education, and was completing applications for college grants well before her graduation, including taking her ACT exam. She is very interested in pursuing a

teaching degree. Ashley told her case manager Gretta Witcher that she knew she had the responsibility of caring for her children and that in order to be a good provider she had to complete her education.

The TEA Program provided Ashley with childcare and mileage reimbursement. Thanks to her personal motivation and help from her case worker, Gretta Witcher, and the Jonesboro DWS office, Ashley remains gainfully employed and moved from the TEA program. She is on track to attain her educational plans. Witcher says, “Ashley seems to be highly motivated in accomplishing her goals and has a very positive attitude, including setting her goals for her future.” ■



[Ashley] is very interested in pursuing a teaching degree.

Shannta Steele

Persistence Pays Dividends

According to DWS Case Manager, John W. Jones, Shannta Steele was working at a Denny's Restaurant in July 2009 when she first came to the Fayetteville DWS Center for assistance. She did not have enough hours of participation to meet eligibility for the Work Pays Program, so their first discussion was about how she could meet the requirements and reapply at a later date.

Shannta did not have her high school diploma. Her Job Corp representative also attended this meeting and continued to serve as Shannta's advisor in the Work Pays Pro-

gram. She reapplied in September 2009, and met initial eligibility requirements. She had also completed her GED in August. She was no longer working at Denny's but had moved into work that was more in line with her educational and employment goals. She was working two jobs, one with Arkansas Support Network, and another at St. John's Child Center where she continued employment throughout her time on Work Pays. During her participation with Work Pays, Shannta remained in full status of the work participation requirements, and received two bonuses for continued employment. ■



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Susan “Beth” McGary

Certified Success

Susan “Beth” McGary came to the Jacksonville DWS Center in 2010, and worked with Case Manager, WanQuita Nettles. Susan, a single mother of one small child, had several barriers to employment, including her need for childcare for her daughter, and personal relationship problems. The center provided Susan with childcare through the TEA program, which enabled her to complete her studies at Eastern College of Health Vocations. Susan completed her coursework in the medical assistant program in October of

2010, and began her internship at Daugherty Medical Clinic. After completing more than one hundred-sixty (160) hours of internship, she completed her certification in December 2011. Susan’s successes can be attributed in part to the DWS Center, as well as its collaborative partners, the Eastern College and the Daugherty Medical Clinic.

Susan is currently employed as a physician’s assistant with Nephrology Associates in Little Rock, and is working at least 40 hours each week. She says she is content with her job and thankful to the TEA Program for providing support during a very difficult time in her life. ■



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Sheila Coffman

Greater Self-esteem Leads to Beautiful Career

Sheila Coffman began her relationship with the Hot Springs DWS office as a TEA participant, and has since transitioned into the Work Pays Program. Upon entrance into the TEA program, Sheila had a number of barriers. She did not have transportation and struggled with employability skills. Due to her circumstances at the time, Sheila and her two children were living with family members. Through leadership and direction from TEA Case Manager, Eve Clark, Sheila was able to set goals and began to gain the self-esteem necessary to overcome those barriers.

Work experience provided the opportunity to gain confidence while helping her eliminate those initial obstacles. Over the course of twenty months, Sheila was able to make invaluable progress toward independence. By utilizing supportive services such as childcare, vehicle assistance, and monthly transportation reimbursements she was able to attend Cosmetology School. Upon completion of the required coursework she obtained her State Cosmetology license. Sheila found employment almost immediately and as a re-

sult, transitioned into the Work Pays Program. Sheila will receive her first Work Pays bonus in March. She and her two children now have a home of their own. ■

