

## Student Success Stories:

#1

Throughout my life, I never wanted to just stop going to school. I've always had a goal and vision of graduating, but it wasn't until about middle school that I lost interest and became disengaged. I never really connected with many of my teachers. Most of the time, I would leave class feeling like I didn't learn much of what they wanted me to understand. A lot of the times, I felt I was going to school just to get a grade and pass. Most of my teachers didn't care whether I was learning or not, so when I fell behind, I didn't care much to catch up. I just stopped going. Even though I stopped going to school, I knew I didn't want to stop learning. I had seen my brother go through the YouthWorks program and decided that I was going to try it out. YouthWorks is an alternative education program that focuses on job training and helping you further your education.

I've been enrolled in YouthWorks for about over a year now and the program has totally transformed my way of thinking and learning. I enjoy learning now. I feel I am in an environment where I am comfortable enough to just absorb and learn any knowledge presented. While I have been at YouthWorks, I have earned my National Work Readiness Certificate, Pre-Apprenticeship Certification Training for Construction and passed three of the four GED tests. I was also selected to participate in the YouthBuild Conference of Young Leaders in Washington DC to speak with senators about the issues we face in our community.

All of my success in working toward my GED at 16 is because I have a place that I can go to and learn with caring people. The staff at YouthWorks will help me to overcome my obstacles and make me feel valued as an individual and not just a kid. In public school, they told me that I wasn't going to graduate till I was 21 considering how behind I was. Now, with the help and support of YouthWorks, I'll have my GED and be enrolled in college by the time I turn 17.

---

#2

When I first entered Youth Works I was planning on getting my GED. As soon as I entered they made me feel so at home. It was an awesome experience because right away I told everybody that I wanted to be part of the culinary job industry and almost right away they were able to help me get a job on their culinary crew. When I was working on the culinary program we were feeding the kids that study at YouthWorks and we were also feeding the local charter school Tierra Encantada where our kitchen was. Then I was offered the opportunity to join the YouthBuild Program by the YouthWorks staff. They said that I could benefit from the program since I was working on getting my GED. When that opportunity arose, I was going to work at the jobsite for Habitat for Humanity building houses and study for my GED. I was able to get a PACT (Pre-Apprenticeship Constuction Training) certificate. As soon as I got to the job site I felt connected with all

my fellow YouthBuild students. I was studying every afternoon for my GED because that was a part of the YouthBuild program. I knew I could get my GED in one shot by the end of my program because the teachers helped me figure out when I was ready. I had gotten a wonderful connection with my fellow YouthBuild students and culinary coworkers. The YouthWorks staff helped me get six certificates including PACT, GED, National Work Readiness Credential, ServSafe, YouthBuild Certificate of Completion and an Educational Scholarship by giving me the opportunity to work toward these certificates. The YouthWorks staff supported me all the way through. These certificates have helped me by giving me more knowledge and work experience. I have had a wonderful experience and achieved more than I ever thought I could with the help and support of YouthWorks. Now I'm able to continue at the Santa Fe Community College to work towards a degree in psychology.

---

#3

Have you ever seen that commercial that says "if you're living in a horror movie, you're making all the wrong choices? Well that was me about a year ago before I found YouthWorks. I was not making the best decisions and was definitely headed down a nasty path. Plus, I was working for a haunted house ran by some crazy people. My standing in life seemed to have fallen right out from under my feet by my own will and I needed a new light to shine on me so I could get myself out of rock bottom and get up and move on to a more positive side of life again.

I was working in a dead end seasonal job at the Slaughterhouse in Albuquerque and was just digging myself into a deeper hole as the days went by. I had no money, I was sleeping in a haunted house, I was just placing myself more in the negative than ever before, and fast. I finally left slaughterhouse moved back home with my folks. My godmother had mentioned this place called YouthWorks that could help me get my GED, so my mother and I took a trip to Santa Fe to check them out. I got there and right away I had maybe 4 people talking to my mother and I about the program YouthBuild and its benefits. I was really excited and my mother seemed to be in shock. "Time to knuckle up and buckle down" I thought. So I signed all necessary paperwork to start my two week trial period of Mental Toughness. The rest was all on me to work hard and do my best and make good progress.

I studied from the end of October to the middle of May for my GED. Something I had not really done but a few times since I left High School In 2010. I volunteered with Habitat for Humanity building homes for those who were homeless and learning a lot of valuable skills along the way. Never would I have felt the pain of hard labor, comforted and relieved by the smiles and tears of other people. I never in my life thought I would ever say Math was fun. I was 23 and I had almost convinced myself that I would never get my GED, but on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 I finally got it. I earned the one thing that would hold me back indefinitely from any and all careers I would want to pursue. Now I have nothing holding me back.

The main reason for my success was the staff at YouthWorks who believe in me. The staff is always engaged, and dependable. If I ever had an issue, they were there to help me through it. The learning environment was another reason for my success. The approach to how we were taught in class was unique. The classroom staff used diverse and creative messaging that engaged me in learning math, language, social studies. I had learned this in high school, but didn't learn it completely because I didn't have the most engaged teachers. Another reason I think I did so well was because the YouthWorks class wasn't only a group of my own age, but a group with mixed ages. It offered a wide range of opinions and allowed for a well-rounded classroom experience that was fun and exciting.

I graduated from YouthWorks YouthBuild program in July of 2015 with my GED, PACT Construction Certification, and the National Work Readiness Credential. Now I am currently in the enrollment process for College in the spring at NNMC. I have never felt more proud of myself. This is my biggest success. If it weren't for the loving staff at YouthWorks and my own determination to get things done I would still be at rock bottom. Now, I am headed for the stars and beyond. I finally know now that I am successfully walking down a brighter path.