

WESTERN ILLINOIS WORKS

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McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren Counties

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

Information About You



Name:

Mahoganee Gay

Degree/Training Pursued:

GED / Associate in Psychology

Educational Institution(s) Attended:

John Wood Community College,
Quincy Campus

Graduation Date/Expected

Graduation Date:

GED 2024 (FY24) and
College June 2026

Career Goals:

I am aiming to be a social worker or
a counselor.

My Motivation

Motivation was never something I just had. There were many times I wanted to get my GED, but I quit because I didn't believe in myself. I made excuses for myself.

I was in a deep depressive mode that held me down. I blamed everyone but myself for the way I was feeling. I felt hopeless and confused on what would be next in my life. I cried and cried; I felt like a failure. But my motivation was growing inside of me every day.

Watching my kids grow, I wanted to be the perfect role model for them. My kids are my motivation. I strive to be the best mom I can be every day. If I don't do anything in life, I want my kids to remember that I tried.

What led me to attend John Wood was my experience with the GED program. They were so helpful and caring for me and my dreams. I loved how they supported me and my kids. As a mother of three, I want to be someone my kids look up to.

God and my kids were my biggest motivation. I couldn't depend on anyone else to do it for me. I had to fight with myself just to get up and go. And when I did I never looked back.

Barriers I Faced

There were many barriers for me, from finding daycare, to working full time third shifts as a CNA or as a psych tech, and the worst barrier was my mental health.

I suffer from severe depression, anxiety, and PTSD. When you have been through traumatic experiences it changes you as a person for better or worse.

In spite of all the things I've been through, I bottled up my pain behind a mask. Lost in my head, it was easy for me to just give up on my dreams, my goals, and my hobbies.

When I started my CNA classes I knew I couldn't quit. I knew people were depending on me and I wanted to show everyone I could do it. It just took me back to when I loved school. I felt like I found a part of me that I was missing. I loved that I challenged myself to actually try and get the job done.

***"I became a success story through
Two Rivers who also participated in
my success."***

My Turning Point

When I was pregnant with my first son, I was in a debate with myself about finishing school or just getting a 9 to 5 job and settling for a job I know I will never enjoy, and I kept hearing myself say I wasn't going to do it.

I remember sitting in the car and praying for help, a type of guidance to my success, it was a matter of time God started moving mountains for me, knocking down barriers that would never move before every test I sat and had a discussion with him and when I came out, I just knew I passed.

God showed me I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me (Philippians 4:13) literally.

What I Would Tell Other People About my Experience

I would tell them that I had no hope whatsoever in myself. I was letting my trauma define me. I was letting other people get in my head to the point where I started to believe them myself.

I had to shake myself out of it; you have to shake yourself out of it. There comes a time when the whole world is on your shoulders or you feel a sense of loneliness or like 'No one cares, why should I?' And I want to answer that you are your own purpose no one can define you but you.

You have to prove to yourself that even when you are your biggest enemy, you can, and you will when you walk through the doors at school you have to take a deep breath and say "I am and I will!"

Turn your phone off and concentrate. You can be your biggest asset or your biggest failure. Every choice you make defines who you are in the end.

I would have to say the anxious feeling of not knowing if I'm going to make it in life was the most difficult thing about pursuing my education. I think about it a lot, and it's a mental battle of whether I'm pursuing the right passion and if this is what God has planned for me.

Right now, I'm learning to put my faith in him because he won't steer me wrong. And don't forget to make time for you. Self love is the key to a relaxing time!

Most Rewarding Experience

I won a scholarship. I became a success story through Two Rivers who also participated in my success. I gained a longtime friend in my instructor Stephanie. And most importantly, my kids got to see me do it.

How I Heard About the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

My instructors had told me about Two Rivers helping with CNA classes. I felt like this was a good option for me because I felt like I knew what I wanted to do and how I wanted to succeed in life. I just needed help accomplishing my goals and they did that for me.

"I would tell people that WIOA is a great opportunity to take advantage of."
