



Portraits of Success

2016-2017



**Modesto Junior College
CalWORKs Program**

www.mjc.edu/studentservices/calworks

Message From MJC CalWORKs



We are excited to share our first CalWORKs Portraits of Success publication. This book was designed to inspire and build a sense of community among CalWORKs students as well as celebrate their successes. Included are stories of some of our CalWORKs students, their struggles, triumphs, and most importantly, their progression and transition to becoming not only self-sufficient, but successful! These students were honored at our End-of-the-Year Celebration in 2017.

The CalWORKs Staff

Our Goal:

The CalWORKs program at Modesto Junior College is committed to providing students who are currently receiving TANF (cash aid) with coordinated student support programs and special services to assist them in reaching their educational and career goals. Our program is dedicated to guide students through a successful educational journey that will help them transition off aid and achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

Services:

We work collaboratively with the Community Services Agency to provide assistance with the following services:

- MJC Application & Priority Registration
- Student Advocacy
- Ongoing Career and Academic Counseling
- Work-Study Opportunities
- Tutoring Referrals
- Childcare
- Emergency Bus Passes/Transportation

- Referrals to On and Off Campus Programs
- Financial Aid Application
- Monthly Attendance Reports
- Coordination of Communication Between CalWORKs Students and Stanislaus County
- Textbooks Vouchers, Re-imbursements, Book Loans
- CalWORKs Student Support Service Center

Ana Serrano

My name is Ana Serrano and I have been on a 20 year-long journey in pursuit of a college degree. I have faced many challenges in life and in finishing school. I started at MJC right out of high school in 1996 but I didn't really know what I wanted to study. Then, in 1997 I got married and I put my education on hold to start a family. After I had my first child I was busy being a mom and working, so I thought I would never have the opportunity to go back to school. In December of 2009 I quit my job and decided to go back to school to become a teacher. I was accepted into a program that paid for my books and tuition for Child Development classes. My husband worked full time and up until then I had worked part time at Keyes Union School District as a paraprofessional. I really enjoyed working with children so I decided to pursue a career in education.

One of the hardest days of my life was the day my husband was arrested on January 28, 2010. He is currently serving a twelve year sentence in prison. I was able to complete the classes I was taking at the time but I didn't re-enroll. I had six young children, was pregnant and I was the sole provider now. I applied for assistance from the county

because I couldn't pay the bills and couldn't get a job until I had my baby. When my baby was 5 weeks old, I got a call from my previous employer telling me I could get my job back because



the other person they hired had not worked out. I went back to work and have been working at Keyes Union School District since then.

The CalWORKS program has been crucial in moving ahead in my education since my husband has been in prison. I have received interview and job readiness training, child care support, clothing vouchers, and financial assistance to continue my education. The support CalWORKS has provided me with has been invaluable for the well-being of my family. My youngest child recently turned six and started kindergarten so my program participation hours went

up. I realized this was my chance to go back to school with the support of the CalWORKS program and continue my journey towards getting a degree in Child Development. My goal is to get

my degree and get a job where I make enough money to be self-sufficient and provide for my family.

Giving back to the community is very important to me because I am grateful for all the assistance I have received. There is a great need for translators and I translate at meetings for parents of English learners and as part of my job I provide primary language support to students learning English.

I also translate for the parent members of the English Learner Advisory Committee. Currently, I am researching advocacy for children of parents in prison. The experience with my own children being deprived of their father has compelled me to research advocacy and be a voice for them and other children in the same situation. My financial situation is still insecure and I would appreciate your consideration for this scholarship to assist me in meeting my educational goals.

Olivia Bartlett

There are many challenges in life we must overcome to pursue anything, especially with children, divorce, and housing issues. I am going to tell you about my challenges, successes, helping hands, future plans, and my involvement in life around me. But before I begin, I would like to tell you a little bit about myself before I began at MJC for the third time in life. Being in my late twenties, of course I have explored my options and attended MJC previously. With just a couple of different majors in mind, I struggled to find one that I was satisfied with as a long-term goal. Having been through two divorces, becoming a single mother of two young children, and having no plan for our future, I decided life needed to change, fast. I chose a major by thinking about what I love to do, rather than by what was most employable in my area. That is when I took control of my life, and everything has been changing for the better since. Two years in and I now have four children, and am engaged to be married to the most wonderful man I have ever met. He encourages me every day, and even has big plans of his own.

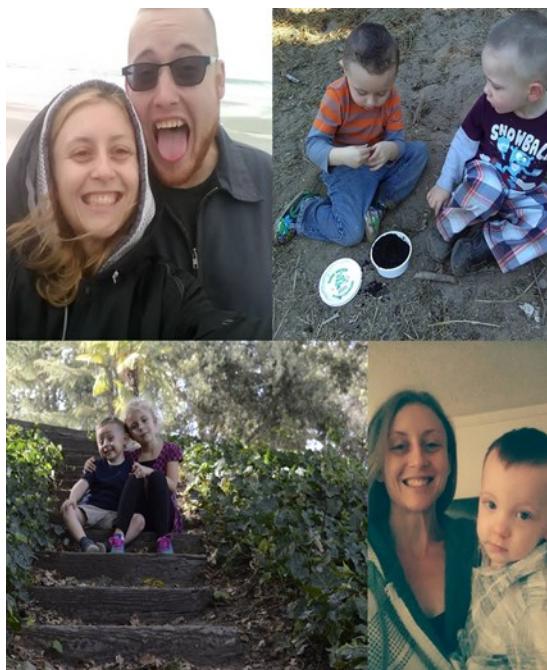
Starting from the bottom always has its challenges. My challenges included things like the stresses of divorce and custody hearings, and finding time for all the paperwork. Single parenthood is another, having to get my oldest to and from preschool every day around my school schedule, and finding a babysitter for my youngest. Then there are horrible landlords that take over six weeks to act after you explain to them that your kid's room and the bathroom are flooded and molding from a leak in the wall, which resulted in black mold everywhere (including inside the walls). One of my biggest challenges was academic probation, where in the beginning I was paying everything out of pocket, until I built up my GPA to qualifying for aid again. That process took about one year. Another of my biggest challenges was, and still is,

finding time to do homework.

I am currently two years in and only have one year left until I have my desired degrees in Photography and Art. I took my GPA from below a 2.0 to a 3.0, and have eight A's in a row on my transcripts. I have been on the Dean's List and inspired my children to be creative, artistic, and environmentally aware. I have found my way around every hurdle and road block life has thrown at me, and have not stopped once on my journey. I have gained confidence in myself and my ability to be successful

grateful. Becoming self-sufficient is an important goal to have. I used to be afraid of the future, before I started back at MJC I had no such goal. My goal now is to get my business license and sell my art and services, while helping my future husband with his business plan. I plan to do work with environmental photography, paintings, business advertisement, and window painting. I will eventually have my own gallery and studio. I also plan to have photography books published of my projects to come. Along the way, I will be looking for all the ways I can incorporate my business and talents to help and make a difference in any way that I can.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to be very involved in anything past my efforts towards my degrees, my children's schedules, our classes and the extra that they themselves require. I do, however, help anyone I come across that is trying to move forward in life. I help by giving any information I have gathered on my journey that could help them in their situation, information about the CalWORKs program and where to go to find the answers they are looking for. I have entered some of my work into contest, and had them displayed in the MJC Art Gallery. I have also taken my children on many walks with bags and grabbers, on a mission to clean the world (representing that you must start somewhere, and every little bit helps). My kids love watching me work, and watching me progress. They see where my heart is and where it's going. I can see the inspiration in their eyes and the possibilities that brings for them. To stop now would not only be a ridiculous decision, it would be damaging to their futures and the way they view life forever. I plan to show my children that they can do whatever they want to in life as long as they work for it and never give up. I am going to keep growing, learning, and helping. As far as I can take this is where I plan to go.



and make necessary changes. Successes are all around you as long as you keep going. I appreciate every one of my perpetual successes in life as I keep moving forward.

The CalWORKs program has assisted me with these successes, by helping me with printing everything needed, answering all of my questions, making my Ed Plan, financial obligations (books, materials, etc.), and so much more. Making it this far and progressing on my road to becoming self-sufficient would have been such a bigger challenge without the CalWORKs program. I am very

Emma Castanon



My name is Emma Castanon and I have faced many challenges in pursuit of my certificate/degree of which the most difficult has been being a single mom with physical limitations due to my back. Now that I am back at school I plan on working hard to achieve my goals as well as to be an example to my children. As far as my

successes, I have been doing well in class and getting good grades on my assignments despite being away from school for so long. I plan on continuing to work hard in order to keep up my good grades. I will do this by studying plenty and getting help from the tutoring center and writing center.

CalWORKs has been a great program; they have been helping me a lot with my book vouchers, priority registration, as well as counseling appointments. On top of all this, they have been giving me advice for what is best for me and this has helped me a lot in order to achieve my goals. Also, the ladies at the MJC CalWORKs office have been helping me too and they are always kind and

patient. The CalWORKs program has been very supportive of me.

My plan is to graduate from college and get a degree so that I can get a great job that I also enjoy. This will be necessary in order for me to be self-sufficient and to support my family.

I used to volunteer for Head Start programs and after school programs as well. I also help at church when they need help. I tried to enroll at care activity for counseling but my physical problem limits my ability to help. I do help students when they ask me and need help. I'm so glad about having this program because it is helping me a lot on my way to succeeding and achieving my goals.

Maricela Sanchez

I believe the biggest challenge I have had to overcome is encouraging myself to keep moving forward after having to get back on my feet again. Becoming a single mom was a big change for me and a new start. It was hard, having no education or career to rely on, I started thinking to my-self, now what? What will I do now? I had wanted to return to school, but was in a relationship where I wasn't allowed to, I lost that hope. I was told I wasn't capable of learning, that I had no chance in school. I began to fear knowledge and had decided to put that thought on hold. Now I put

those fear feelings away and enrolled in school, which was a huge step for me. I have adapted well in my classes. I have been trying new techniques for learning and they have been working great for me. My goals are to keep my grades up and I have been focusing on my effort, dedication as well as time in my education. The CalWORKs program has been a great help to me. They have helped me create an Ed plan and introduced me to amazing workshops filled with information. I recently learned the steps to transferring and managing my time thanks to these workshops. I plan

to keep pushing myself and giving it my all so that I can one day graduate MJC with my associates in Psychology. I am doing all this for my boys, to provide a good example for them and have the opportunity to give them a better future in life.





My name is Tamara Poulos. I am more than just a face. I am an individual who has overcome many hardships and still encounter daily obstacles that I have to overcome. I am pursing my undergraduate degree in natural sciences in my pathway to Nursing. My goal is to attend Modesto Junior College and gain my RN. After getting my RN I will transfer to Stan State in order to gain my Bachelors in Nursing. The difficult-

Tamara Poulos

ties in life as well as my personality contribute to why I want to become a nurse.

Before beginning MJC in spring 2015, I had been out of school for over a decade. I was a teen mom and constantly worked to pay the bills. During my early twenties, I was not allowed in my house or to see my daughter because of an abusive relationship I was in. I had to live in the back of a friend's house in a shed. Just to wash my hair was an obstacle in the cold winters because I would have to wash my hair outside with a hose. Finally I left the abusive relationship. I then had three children and was financially on my own. It is hard to do fun things with the kids due to money. However, work and school do not allow for much free time. I worked hard and it still was not enough. Now going to school is a change I am making in order to better my children, myself and help others. However, it is hard because I cannot

pick up extra shifts in order to pay bills because of being in school.

While attending college, I have also had to overcome many obstacles. My son was diagnosed with ADHD and is having a lot of trouble in school. It is hard to help with his school work and then do my homework also. My daughter was having a very hard time socially. This led me to having to constantly meet with her school counselors and once stay up all night at the hospital. In fact the night I stayed up at the hospital with my daughter, I had to be at school bright and early the next day. However, I am making wonderful strides of dedication by taking full time classes and keeping a high GPA throughout my time at college. The support I get from my fellow students helps when times are hard and my goal to give my family a better life is my motivation.

Emily Skinner

Hello my name is Emily Skinner and I'm twenty-three years old. I became a single mother at the age of nineteen to a beautiful little girl. Once I got pregnant I never thought that I would be able to go back to school, but when I found out about the CalWORKs program I knew I would have the supportive services I needed to continue on with my education. I always wanted to do something in the medical field, but I was never sure how I was going to be able to afford school and all the expensive supplies that come along with the field. The career path that I decided on is to become a Registered Nurse. I plan on getting my BSN first and then continuing on to get my Master's in Midwifery. CalWORKs

has helped me pay for expensive books which I would have not been able to afford on my own. I also get to keep them for studying purposes later on. Being a single mother has many challenges like finding daycare for your child, time to study, and better yourself as a mother. Since I have been on CalWORKs I have had four semesters with a 4.0 GPA and an overall GPA of 3.77. I have continued to keep up my grades in hopes to make it into the nursing program. After nursing school I plan on taking care of my daughter on my own while also giving back to the community because I have benefitted so much from the help of others. My goal in life is to help others and to spread the word



about CalWORKs for those that are struggling to make ends meet. Education is key in life and because of the CalWORKs program I am able to go to school, work on campus, and be a better mother.

Tasha Williams

It is very exciting to apply for this Student Success Scholarship! I have never applied for a scholarship before, but at this time in my life – I FEEL IT IS NECESSARY! You see, I am a returning college student. By that I mean I've been a student here at Modesto Junior College before – MANY TIMES! My first attempt was directly after graduating High School. I failed initially because I didn't take it seriously! Then, I got married. I would begin college again after marriage, but we

started our family and I stayed home to raise our children. So again, I failed. It seemed as though life circumstances always hindered my education. Then, finally, this year, I told myself, "You're not getting any younger. If you have dreams you'd like to reach and goals you still have in mind – **JUST DO IT!**" And thus began my journey to get my degree!

I enrolled at MJC and realized that sloppy efforts from my past courses were haunting me! I was ineligible for any financial aid which placed me on academic probation due to poor grades and incomplete classes. I was ready to give up, when I ran into another MJC student who told me about the California Community Colleges Association



(CalWORKs) and encouraged me to get involved with the program. I applied AND THE BALL WAS ROLLING! I met the lovely Laura Jonassen of CalWORKs and she encouraged me! I stressed as my classes began in the spring of 2016! I never believed I could do it! I doubted myself at every turn! I felt that as a single parent, carrying 12 Units, raising two children on my own, **AND** holding a part-time job, surely I would be unable to accomplish my goals. However, about 3 weeks in, **IT ALL CLICKED!** I was on a roll! I started getting my papers back from my professors with scores of 95% and above on all my work! I couldn't believe it!! By the end of Spring Semester, for the first time in my life, I WAS A

STRAIGHT "A" STUDENT! I even made the Dean's List and received a congratulatory letter from MJC's President, Jill Stearns!

Currently, I am living out all of my educational dreams! My major in Human Services/Sociology has allowed me to take on a rewarding volunteer job with the Stanislaus Family Justice Center (SFJC). I am a published writer and my articles are in both www.ValleyViews.Biz online magazine and in print with Stanislaus Connections here: <http://stanislausconnections.org/Connections%20Dec16.pdf>,

and through CalWORKs, I have a part-time job at The Great Valley Museum on MJC's West Campus.

I truly believe that my initial meeting with Laura Jonassen and being blessed enough to share my heart, as well as my educational goals with her through the CalWORKs Program, has deeply contributed to my success here at MJC. I'm on the right track!

I smell success right now – 100%! Life is good at Modesto Junior College through the California Community Colleges Association!

THANK YOU CalWORKs!

Jenna Deliddo

My name is Jenna Deliddo and I am currently working on finishing my nursing prerequisites. According to my ED plan, the process has taken me a little longer than I had originally anticipated. I came to MJC straight out of high school with a plan, and like most I'm sure, life had a way of changing things and took me in a different direction. I chose to work full time, and go the private college route. I am now a single mother of a four year old boy, who I absolutely adore. Life was pretty good, I was making enough money to pay our bills and provide the things we needed. I had still put school on the back-burner, and was working with my medical assistant certificate. I went into work on a normal day for a regular shift only to learn that it would be my last. The medical office I had worked for the past three years was being shut down and forced to close its doors. I was eligible for unemployment, but knew myself and knew I needed to be doing more. I came to the MJC to see if there was an appointment to meet with a counselor. Not sure where to go, I

wandered around feeling out of place and overwhelmed with the thought of starting school again. Contemplating to stay or go, I noticed two girls behind a desk who appeared to be right at home. Before I knew it they were motioning me over to where they sat and had all the answers to questions I hadn't even asked. They were CalWORKs student workers, but to me they are the ones who got me back on track and made all the difference for me that day. With their help I signed up and became a part of the CalWORKs program. The workers provided me with supportive services information that I was unaware existed but I was eligible to use. I received help with the costs of my books, I was given trans-

portation reimbursement, priority registration, and help with child care. These supportive services effected my life in a huge way, and I realized as a parent, school was geared to help me succeed. I finished my first semester with nothing less than a B, I was enjoying school. I met with my counselor once that semester like we are supposed to but I visited that CalWORKs desk where the student workers sat on a weekly basis. I enjoyed their company and being in close proximity to other students who were in similar walks of life gave me the confidence to keep pushing forward. Suddenly I wasn't ashamed to be receiving assistance from welfare and realized it's okay that I wasn't quite where I

wanted to be in life, I wasn't alone in my feelings. The CalWORKs program has been a game changer for me, I now go to school full time and became one of those student workers. This job holds a lot of meaning to me, because at a time where I was feeling loss and defeated, it was this program and its staff that took hold of me and showed me the way.



Scarlet Galindo



As a teenager, I was never very focused. I didn't take school seriously and did not graduate. I was able to find work, but the pay was at minimum. I have been on assistance for many years. Just to get by I have worked two jobs at once, not leaving me much time for anything else. I have three children and being able to go back to school to better myself has been a challenge. I finally went to some classes offered by the county to help find me find work after I lost my full-time job and needed cash assistance. Ms. Chavez was my instructor and she was awesome. She helped me

get enrolled into a program to obtain my high school diploma which I achieved in 2015. The program even offered childcare and paid for my books. None of this would have been possible without the help from the county.

I received my high school diploma in 2015, which was a huge accomplishment for me. I am now enrolled in Modesto Junior College taking my prerequisites so I may earn a certificate or degree in the medical field. I currently work full time at a car dealership. I have a huge desire to work for the city or county. I

have recently applied for the police department and with Stanislaus County as a Family Services Specialist. I think with determination and persistence anything is possible.

They have showed me that it is not too late to pursue an education and that they are there to help me in achieving greater independence and self-sufficiency in life. It has not only been the College program, but people I've met along the way including my CalWORKs worker and my job club advisors. All of these people have

given me the tools I have needed to get where I am today, and that I am thankful for.

Setting realistic goals for myself is important. I plan on continuing my education so that I will not need to depend on the county or anyone else for assistance. My long term goals are being able to find a career in something I love doing and providing for my loved ones. It will not be easy, but when you set your mind to something and look at the big picture, it can and will be achieved.

My two girls play soccer for Ceres. They absolutely love it. I am there with them every practice and game. I try to volunteer as much as I can because I know how much it means to them. My son is in the Navy Seal Cadet program in Modesto. He participates about twice a month and I volunteer my time whenever possible, which includes serving lunch to the cadets or driving them to and from events. Every month we volunteer time serving breakfast or dinner to our Veterans at the VFW or American Legion Hall. We also support Alzheimer's walk for a cure.



A wise woman once said "We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated." -Maya Angelou.

Ever since I was a little girl, I remember hearing those kind words from my Mother. Growing up, I began to believe in those words using them as inspiration. Going back to school after being a very lengthy absence, due to me giving birth to a beautiful little girl, happens to be the biggest challenge I had to face. Being a single mother, can take a lot of hard work, dedication, and missing out on the little things previously taken for granted. Being a new mom while jug-

ging an enormous load of course work became very stressful. Through my journey, daily I had to remind myself that if I could get through the rough days, I could finish school and provide a better life for my child & myself. I have always had a passion to learn new things. My overall goals is to become a dentist for people who are specifically low income. I realized in order to reach these goals, my strive for a college degree was vital.

I moved to Modesto from the Bay Area in 2015. I started attending Modesto Junior College which has opened many opportunity for me and my career. While going to school full-time I was blessed with the opportunity to be able to do work-study for the CalWORKs program. Who would've thought that there were so many helpful people in the world. The reason I chose CalWORKs is because every little thing can make a big difference! Helping others is my passion

and realizing you can use compassion to support others dreams is a reason I felt so strongly about this opportunity. CalWORKs shaped me into the person I am today. The program helped me to become more productive and self-sufficient. Being in CalWORKs as a worker, and a participant I received services available to all CalWORKs clients. The many different type of supportive services which included book loans, transportation and most importantly childcare. I am currently still working on my degree, In the very end I always strive for the best possible, what others might see as a setback, I see as a blessing that has better me as a person, mother, student and employee. Being a single mom has taught me the definition of work ethic, hard work that is rewarding in the end. In my case, the award will eventually be success.

Stephanie Wright

My name is Stephanie Wright and I am working towards a Bachelor's in Liberal Arts to become a teacher. I have always dreamed of becoming a teacher yet the path to get there has not been easy. I had worked at multiple financial institutions for many years but I was never happy. I always knew I wanted to do more and help our youth but it was just never feasible. I was taking some night classes here and there, yet progress was moving slowly.

I finally decided to go to school full time and only work part time. A few months later I found out I was pregnant and a month after that I lost my job. I was so scared and nervous and feeling like once again I would have to put school on the back burner until I was told about CalWORKs. I went into the appointment very unsure about what the program even offered, be-

cause I had honestly never heard about it. I found out that they would help with books, which can be more expensive than classes, gas reimbursements, and help finding a job on campus that will work around my school schedule! They even had a counselor who was dedicated to helping students like myself to build a flawless student education plan. I literally left crying because I was so happy.

For the first time I was in school full time and feeling confident that I could finish, which is ironic to think when you're pregnant and unemployed. I would not have been able to do any of this without the CalWORKs program. The help and support I have been given is amazing. I currently work on campus in the CalWORKs office so I am able to assist other students like myself. My beautiful baby boy is



going on one. I have my student teaching certificate and I am a few semesters away from achieving my goal of transferring. I appreciate this program for all of its help. I hope many others take advantage of this program to further their education and better their lives.

Christina Hughes

My name is Christina Hughes I'm 33 years old with a 12 year old daughter. I moved across the street from MJC and I had attempted college about 3 times and didn't complete anything. I had this urge to try it again the summer of 2016. What I learned in that time was that I could do anything I set my mind too. I got all A's and enjoyed every minute of it. It built my self confidence in a major way. I get very overwhelmed at times and question what am I doing? Am I too old for this? But I continue to push. I have to show my daughter that I can achieve this so she knows she can achieve anything she chooses.

In my life I've been faced with so many struggles. My dad is an addict and my mother raised me with the help of my older sister. My mother struggled raising two girls without help. She never finished High School so her job experience was very selective. Throughout all this I started hanging around the wrong crowds and ended up in my father's footsteps. Never did I think I had a problem, but for some odd reason things never worked out in my favor. Eventually I got into an abusive relationship that just didn't end very well. I knew something had to change if not for me for my daughter. Some-



times you may not want to face your fears but the hole gets bigger and bigger eventually you just can't see the light. So God did for me what I couldn't do for myself and placed me at the right time at the right place, and after 15 years of using drugs I got clean.

Today I have been clean for a 1 year and 2 months. In 2014 my house burnt to the ground and we lost everything we owned. So in February of 2016 I got my own place again. I was first introduced to a program called ARCH through CalWORKs; they kept me focused and we came up with a game plan to achieve things that I thought

were never possible. At first I wasn't quite sure what I was wanting to do. Moving across the street from the college I knew once again God had a plan for me. I remember the first day I felt old and scared. I just knew with all the help CalWORKs had already given me I didn't want to let them down. I got involved and asked questions and found out we had CalWORKs at the College. I had never used the resources MJC had offered and this time I wasn't turning away any opportunity I came across. CalWORKs helped me get a work study position at EOPS/CARE. This was one of the best things I could've ever been

given. I get to help out other struggling single mothers and children. It feels fantastic to give back to our community like our community has given me.

If it wasn't for all that CalWORKs has to offer I don't think I would have ever been able to achieve the amazing opportunities I have. I continue to strive and focus on achieving my career in radiology and showing my daughter a different way today. Thank you for everything CalWORKs.

Lorna Haro



As a divorced-single mother with three children I have had to work minimum wage jobs to support my children. I knew that I wanted to go back to school and get my BA degree. I knew it would be hard and it took a lot for me to ask for help. Luckily my parents have let my children and I live with them until I can get on my feet. I have gone through many changes and challenges with working, going to school, being a mother of three, a daughter who just nursed both parents back to health after each having major surgeries within six months of each other. Raising two teenagers and a pre-teen while teaching them how important education is for their future. Plus the fact of not being in school for over twenty years and afraid of not being able to keep up were

years have tried but not kept me down.

While I have been here at school, I have managed to receive 4 certificates towards my teaching goal. After receiving my Associate of Science Degree in Spring I am planning on transferring to CSU Stanislaus in Fall of 2017 to pursue my Bachelor's Degree in Child Development.

With the help of the CalWORKs program I have been able to get my books, pay for my benefits, and most of all the gas mileage, which was the most costly for me. I have worked hard to get where I am now and do not want to stop when I am so close to achieving my goals. With their help, I had less financial stress which allowed me to keep up my grades in classes.

my challenges that I have had to overcome. I have also had my own health issues of being diagnosed with Diabetes, planter fasciitis, bone spur on foot and my asthma flaring up even more this past two

I have plans on getting off CalWORKs and being able to take care of my family with my degree paving the way for a better paying job. This program has helped me when I needed it the most. This is not just for anybody. You have to work to improve yourself so that you are able to be self-sufficient and provide for your family. You are accountable for achieving your goals and they are here to help you reach them.

Working on campus in my field of study Child Development, you meet so many students and staff that are wanting the same as you. They all want to work with children. The Child Development Faculty have created a Child Development Club to participate in many of the campus activities to promote the club. I have participated in meetings and functions to represent the field I am entering and to invite others as well.

While I appreciate the time you have taken to read this I hope to be considered for this scholarship.

Thank you.

Bernadeh Mokhatas

Being a new refugee somewhere which is completely different from your home country is a challenging experience that you can never erase from your mind. I would like to describe how difficult it was to adjust to the United States life for my family and I when we arrived here. Before we came to the United States, we had already prepared ourselves by studying English for a while, and learning about the U.S. culture. We had many beautiful dreams for our future, but the real life was so different from our imagination. Immigration to the United States was a journey full of struggles and difficulties for us. A new culture, unfamiliar language, lacking job and having three children all were reasons for my husband and I to give up. We were looking for a job all the time, but our English was not good enough to find a suitable job. Everything was turned upside down in my family's life. Before that, we had never experienced such a difficult situation. We were regretful and hopeless, but it was not forever. In that bad situation, something which changed my life, was a life rule in a great story book, "A racer will never let something that has already hap-

pened affect what is happening now." I read it in "The Art of Racing in the Rain", a miracle book full of useful experiences for a successful life. It



was the time to forget the past, and start from the beginning, so we did it, and we decided to enroll at MJC two years ago. Since spring 2015, my husband and I have been studying at MJC. In this challenging journey, we have been supported by CalWORKs, an organization whose goal is giving service to low income parents, especially when they are students, to study and achieve their goals. This organization has provided many opportunities such as taking

care of the college book expenses, finding a job at MJC, and counseling for students who are on the program. I appreciate all CalWORKs employees for having an important role in motivating students to study and improve their lives. Indeed, education is one of the most important opportunities that the United States government provides for people to achieve a high standard life, so it is our duty to use it in a good way and do our best. People hardly ever can predict what will exactly happen in the future, but they can imagine the future based on their present activities. I believe that everything will change, and we will develop our life in the best way for years to come. I think by the end of 2018, my husband and I will have graduated from MJC. After that, I will transfer to the university to study for my favorite major, teaching, with the help of God. I am sure that our life will be going in a right direction in the future and we will be useful people in society. Finally, I must thank God, who always controls our life, and then the United States government, which has supported us since we arrived here, to handle and improve our lives.



Ievgen Burmistrov

My way at Modesto Junior College. My name is Ievgen Burmistrov. I am from Ukraine. I have a wonderful family, my beautiful wife and two great children. All that is necessary for life. My life came to a sudden change almost three years ago. I had a good job, comfort of your own name in the family. We had an active life, and took part in the worship life of the church. When our city came to military action and the

country's economy tanked, my family was forced to leave the national country. Now we live in Modesto, California .To learn the American culture, laws and rights, I have to learn the English language to be able to move on. I will see the goal and step by step, I'll make it to the end. Almost one year ago, I got the confidence that I needed to make the first step and applied to Modesto Junior College to get an education. I found out about the Modesto College CalWORKs program which helped to take ESL classes for the English language. My wife and I came into the office CalWORKs to know the information staff explained to us in great detail. For about one year with the CalWORKs program ,we confidently go to the goals. My dream has always been to work in a large

growing American company, My first step to the goal was becoming a driver that will in the future achieve more. I like that the staff makes CalWORKs, the team feel and follow your success and that regardless how hard your life is feeling you can complete your goals. It has been one of the best support systems that I have had in my life. Looking back into time to do the analysis of this year. We can definitely say that together we have had success with the staff program CalWORKs. I'm sure if I have any problems they are always willing to help. I'm grateful to the program CalWORKs that staff are helping these people know how to determine the training of our future. No optional program CalWORKs working. The program CalWORKs I will be necessarily successful!

Olesia Burmistrova

My name is Olesia Burmistrova. I came with my family to the United States from Ukraine about one year ago. We had to leave our home because of the war that was going on in the country.

In Ukraine I had a home, job that I studied for, church, family and friends. Because of the war situation I had to leave all that to come to a peaceful America to my relatives who were already living here. Now I live in Modesto, California.

My children are going to school and my husband and I are

studying the English language at MJC. We have no knowledge of English language addressed to the office and they are patient and understanding towards us. I had a lot of help with the ESL classes from the CalWORKs program. I am ready to study hard and work for the sake of my children to have a better life. CalWORKs program always consults me on my questions, informs me about different options about classes and other issues. My dream is to learn the profession of a nurse and I am sure that this will help me and guide CalWORKs as before.



I am very thankful to the CalWORKs program for their amazing help and contribution to someone like me.

Ariel Urias

Since I have been pursuing my degree, I have had to overcome some big challenges. A lot of different things that were going on in my life started to hold me back. I lost my mother to cancer during one of my Summer semesters. I had to drop my classes because I was practically living at the hospital with my mom. I did not want to leave her side. It was very hard for me to watch my mom die. She was my best friend. I was not able to think straight. Then, I got pregnant with my son Adam. He is the biggest blessing of my life. Although, being a single mom is one of the hardest things I have ever experienced in my life. I was trying to juggle going to school with a newborn baby, and everything else that was going on in my life, while teaching myself how to be a mom. I had to teach myself how to be the best mom I can be for my baby. And I am still learning how to be a great mom every day that goes by. I had a lot of bumps in the road, but I managed to pull through and I will be finishing up my degree this Spring semester. Of course there are many other things that have happened in my life, but it is way too much to put on paper!

I have had a lot of successes in making progress to my educational goals as well. Math has always been a struggle for me throughout my life. I

started all the way back at Math 10. I struggled in Math 20, but I passed with a B with a lot of hard work and dedication. Then going into Math 70, I felt like it was going to be way too hard. I knew I needed extra help, so I buckled down and went to tutoring every day. I passed! Once I got to Math 89 I struggled the entire time. I had an F the majority of the semester. But I pulled through and aced the final. I ended up getting a C. I thought math was going to keep me from receiving my degree, but I stuck to it and passed!

I do not know what I would have done if it was not for the Cal Works program at MJC. They have been there for me every step of the way! I must admit that Cal Works has been my biggest support system my whole college experience. I was always able to lean on them no matter what. They let me know about so many different resources as well. Cal Works was my rock. And I will be forever grateful.

Every day I work on being more self-sufficient. I am a very independent woman. I do everything on my own, and I

strive every day so I can give my son the life he deserves. I plan to keep striving and working towards my goals. I plan to never give up and always try hard. I never want to live my life thinking "what if".



I have been a volunteer at Community Hospice for about five or six months now. I go every week, and help out in the office. I help families who are going through grief. This has been such an amazing journey for me so far. I love contributing to my community. I love being able to lay my head down at night knowing I helped someone. I also work in the disability office at MJC. I have been learning so much along the way.

Shanena Ochoa

The challenges I have had to overcome to pursue my degree/certificate was working one day a week, I am a mother of four children and I am the sole supporter of my family because my husband is disabled with no income. I had a horrible childhood. I had to overcome a lot of depression due to being sexually abused by my mom's husband for eight years, from the fourth grade all the way to the twelfth grade. I have always been told that I will never finish my education because it's too expensive.

I want to prove to my family that I can and will finish my education and reach my dreams. I am someone who loves school no matter how hard it gets and will continue until I finish. I am the only one in my family who will graduate from college, and that means a great deal to me.

The success I have had in making progress towards my goal is that I have made extreme progress with my grades. I am currently taking five classes this semester and have all A's. This is a big success for me because I was diagnosed with a learning disability in elementary school and school has always been

hard for me.

The MJC CalWORKs program helped me meet my goals by helping me pay for my books and counseling me to make sure I am on the right track. I like how they have us keep a record of our grades because it gives me more encouragement to keep striving. I also like the fact that this program is here to help low income families. I am very grateful for all the services from the CalWORKs program. It's nice to know that we have these kind of services willing to help one succeed.

The staff are always kind and helpful. Thank you for everything you guys do for the people to succeed.

My plans to become self-sufficient is to get my degree and start working as a kindergarten teacher, and to be able to support my family without assistance. I want to be able to get off of Government assistance one day and be able to purchase a house for my family.

I have been involved in advocacy, student leadership,

community service and extra-curricular activities by volunteering at my church for Sunday school and sometimes I go baby sit the babies for families who have bible study. I also volunteer at my sons pre-school to help out in the classroom and be involved in his learning process. I also volunteer when I have time at my daughter early head start program and MJC when I have free time.



Joan Tajon



My name is Joan Tajon and my journey to reach my academic goals has been filled with a variety of challenges. I am originally from Molokai, Hawaii. I am a recovering drug addict and have been clean for five and half years. My biggest challenge was coming into my second semester at Modesto Junior College and having discovered that I had a bench warrant out for my arrest (in Hawaii). I had no one else to turn to, and my only support was CalWORKs. So I took my benefits and was able to take care of my bench warrant, and I returned the following semester (shaken but not defeated).

Being that CalWORKs was my only support, they were able to help me out not

only financially but also emotionally. Because I've generated close bonds with the staff at CalWORKs, I was able to put my past behind me and push forward to meet my educational goals. All that support has put me in the position where I have been able to make incredible progress towards my academic goals. In spring of 2017, I will be graduating and transferring in the fall to CSU Stanislaus as a Psychology major and plan to become a counselor in higher education. My goals would have remained dreams had it not been for the CalWORKs program. CalWORKs has been such an amazing experience. They have been a shoulder to cry on when I needed a tender touch and have also been that

stern hand guiding me when I need structure. CalWORKs has guided me through the most difficult times while at MJC and has helped me figure out who I am as person. If not for CalWORKs, I wouldn't be the person that I am today.

Today, I know I will make it on my own thanks to everything that I've learned from this amazing program. I am becoming self-sufficient through learning how to be financially responsible, learning how to plan for the future, and preparing to continue my education.

Now that I know who I am and know who I want to be, I've become more active on campus and throughout the community. I am currently a part of the EOPS/CARE Program and have mentored women for two semesters who share similar trials as I did. I also attend Cross Point Community Church every Sunday with my six-year-old son and have been actively volunteering my time teaching children's ministry (18-24 months) for two years.

Thank you CalWORKs for all of your support and the services that you've provided. I will forever be thankful.



Mother of three beautiful children, fiancé, daughter, sister, there are so many names I go by these days. As a student near the end of completion for my certificate in Logistics and Supply Chain Management I have faced many struggles to get to where I am now. Nothing worth doing is ever easy but nothing easy is ever

Heather Aguirrie

worth your time.

Most days it was a struggle to get out of bed, willing myself that this will all be over soon, like a mantra every morning, "All the work will pay off soon, just get up, it's only another day". Then I see my sweet daughter rise as if she has springs in her feet and I smile, take a breath, and begin the day. The obvious challenges arise when you attend college courses while taking care of three kids, two of which are babies, getting all your work turned in, keeping in contact with your schoolmates and counselors, losing a car, getting fired! Nevertheless, I remained optimistic and it is all becoming one great success story. Soon I will have a degree in a prestigious and growing field after hurdling many obstacles, and still standing, willing to keep fighting

for a better life for my children and me. None of my success would be as valuable if I didn't have the assistance from the CalWORKS program. It's amazing how caring and willing everyone is, I can't recall a single moment when I felt anything less than heartwarming individuals trying to make a difference.

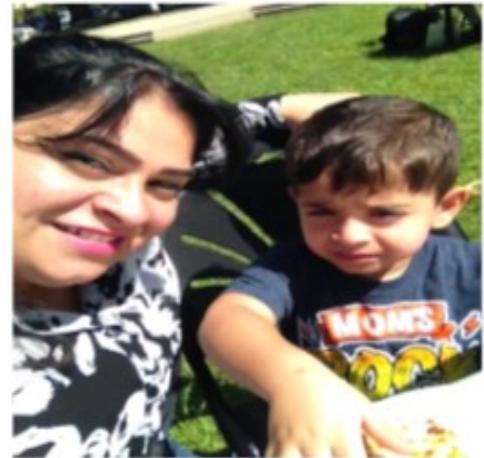
All of this will hopefully lead me to the future where I am a self-sufficient home owner, with a stable career, who is working toward owning her own business soon. My time will still be spent volunteering every Wednesday at the library and being an assistant coach to my son's basketball team but I will be more empowered and that much greater for all those people who encouraged me to never give up.

Thank you.

Nour Mahmoud

I came to the United States 4 years ago. When I arrived here, I didn't speak much English. For many times, I had to ask people to slow down or repeat what they were saying because I didn't understand what they were saying. I have two kids and a disabled husband, so it was very hard to start school at that time. I had to stay home and take care of them. At that time, I decided to improve my language while I was staying home. I decided to start reading and watched TV. I read anything I could get books, newspapers, magazines, and advertisements. I worked hard to improve my language, and I did it. I started to speak and understand English well. I started to plan to achieve my dreams. I wanted to start school. After three years from my arrival to the United States, I started to go to the MJC. I started with the ESL classes, but I

took only two of them. My professors advised me to skip the ESL and started with the college level classes. In the beginning I was very afraid to fail, but I decided to work hard and never give up. Since I started at the MJC I finished all my classes with A's. This semester, I'm taking English 101, History 104, and Humanity 101. I'm working very hard to get A's this semester too. I'm also very proud to be a student worker at the Campus Life and Student Learning Center ASMJC for the second semester. As a person who came to the US. four years ago, I didn't have any work experience in the United States, so being a student worker is a huge opportunity toward being self-sufficient. When I graduate I will have a very good experience, and good communication skills. My dream is to be a social worker so I can help other people. I believe that I can



motivate people and help them to find their path and achieve their goals because I myself now depending on many programs that are helping me while I'm seeking my degree. The help that I'm getting from the MJC CalWORKS is phenomenal. I really appreciate the motivation, encouragement, and financial support that they provide me with. After one year at the MJC, I'm a hard worker and determined student.

Ashley Lengling

Everyone faces their own challenge when they make the decision to go back to school and better their life, whether it is personal or external, I am no different. Growing up, my life was no "walk in the park" and school has always been a struggle for me. We moved so much and I was forced to go from school to school, fourteen all together, this made it hard for me to learn properly and fully understand all subjects being taught. With that said, the thought of college made me cringe. When I was 15, my dad got very sick and passed. Before his passing, he made me promise that I would continue to go to school and make my mom proud but shortly after his passing, I became pregnant at the young age of sixteen. I honestly thought my life was over and was not sure if I would be able to keep my promise and continue school, but with the help of my mom and husband, who was my boyfriend at the time, I pushed through and graduated with straight A's. After high school, I was forced to get a job because it was nearly impossible to make it on one income. After a few years, and two more children, I realized it was time to make a change, my job was getting me nowhere and I could not live like that forever. I finally made up my mind and signed up for school. A few days later, I got a phone call saying that my mom was very sick and in the hospital with six weeks to live. My family and I decided to move back to California so that I could care for my mom. My husband left a good job and I was forced to put school on hold once again. We made the move, I took care of my mom and went back to work, then she passed 10/11/09. I

felt like school was the last thing on my mind, I was depressed, My mom passed, I had a three month old baby, plus I thought it would be too hard to work and go to school. Well, a few more years went by and my kids were getting older and I couldn't imagine my life like that forever and I knew it was time to make a change and go back to school. I knew it would be a challenge, but nothing worth having comes easy, right? So, August 2013, was my first semester at MJC and since that year I have not stopped. I push through all the hard times with work, school, three kids, losing my job, and personal struggles at home, with my ultimate goal in mind, to give my family and I a better life.

I have made great success in making progress toward my educational goals. I have passed all my classes needed so far, to get into the Respiratory Therapy program. Any class that I did not pass, I retook in efforts to better my GPA and chances of getting accepted into the program. I have done well so far and plan on keeping it up, and even doing better.

MJC CalWORKs has helped me a lot of different ways. First thing is that they helped me stay on track with my educational goals by providing me with an up to date educational plan and making sure that I follow that plan each semester. They also help with book funds when necessary. Without that additional help, I would not have been able to take



some classes that I needed this semester. They also provide me with additional services like mileage, and anything I may need help with regarding school.

My plans to become self-sufficient are to finish school and get a career in Respiratory Therapy. I plan on getting a job at the hospital to start off then later go to a doctor's office or clinic, save some money, and eventually buy a house for my family and I.

I've been involved in the community in a few different ways. I volunteered at a homeless shelter, where a friend works, and I helped women fill out housing, food stamp, and job applications that they were unable to do otherwise. Also, a year ago, I went to visit my old high school in Phoenix, AZ and spoke with a few teen moms who were having a hard time finishing school. I told them my story and offered them advice.

Angelica Torres

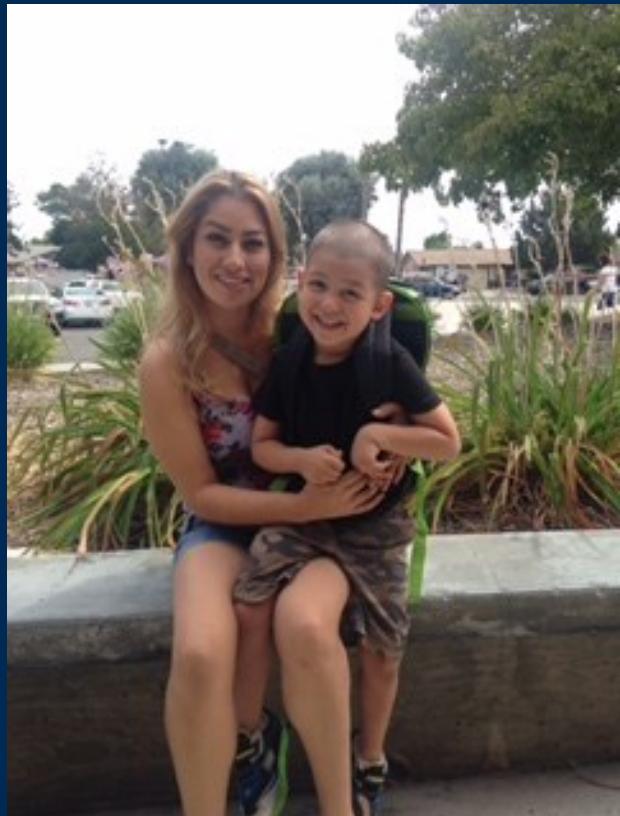
I married and started my family at a young age. After two years in a verbally, emotionally, and physically abusive relationship, I decided to pack my bags and take my son into a future of uncertainty. I had a part-time job and I was hopeful that my son and I could make it alone. That day my son developed a cold. I made an appointment with his doctor and was told that my son's cold could be something more serious. He was rushed to Oakland Children's Hospital where he was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. My two-year-old son had cancer. That is the day my life stopped, I had to leave my job and dedicate my life to help my son fight to survive. This was the start of a long three-year battle.

During his treatment, I thought enrolling myself in online classes would be beneficial. This way I could get some credits completed and eventually earn a degree. But our inconsistent schedule and unpredictable visits to the emergency room took a toll on my concentration and dedication in school. I had to withdrawal from my classes. I had always been interested in the health field. After high school, I considered pursuing an education in nursing but because my grades were not the best I did

not think I could succeed. I was used to this cycle of giving up when things became too hard. I was so afraid of failure that instead I gave up before I could fail. Because my son needed me as his personal nurse, I spent many hours at the hospital observing nurses. They had a big impact in our lives. I decided this is what I wanted to do.

After a harsh treatment of chemotherapy my son entered remission. He and I overcame the most difficult challenge we had ever experienced. I knew now that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to. After three years, I was ready to take on the challenge and return to school. Shortly, I proved myself correct. I started taking a couple of classes at a time and when I earned my first "A" I challenged myself with more. I was soon a full-time student at Modesto Junior College. But this meant more expenses, which made me question if I would ever reach the nursing program.

The CalWORKs program has been a great support in



reaching my goals. Their services have helped remove some obstacles and stress during the process. I am on track to a 4.0 GPA for this semester, scheduled to graduate May 2017 with my associate degree, and apply to the nursing program. Graduating from the nursing program will help me reach my goal of becoming a RN and become self-sufficient. During our winter break I plan on volunteering at our local hospital and giving back to our community. I hope that sharing my story with others will help inspire single mothers who have struggled with domestic violence or an ill loved one.

Sharon Grogan

As I slowly stride down the clean brightly lit tan corridor to my first class an eager student ready to learn, I keep walking with my burdensome backpack full of books and binders ready to gain so much knowledge from them. Not knowing a single soul, I smile from ear to ear hoping someone will say hi and I can make a new friend along the way. To my left before I enter the classroom, I look and I see a blue Pirate banner on the wall and in that moment it all sinks in. I take a deep breath, and in my mind I do imaginary fist pumps in the air in celebration. As a person who never had college education as a goal on their vision board, I did it! I'm finally here and enrolled and attending Modesto Junior College.

Hi there I'm Sharon LaRose Grogan 31 years old I am one unique African-American women, full-time student, & full-time single-mother to a beautiful two year old named Melody. I grew up in Pleasanton California, they have some of the best distinguished schools you can attend. My learning environment was very conducive to my education. Fast forward to high school, my family moved. We left distinguished school districts to move to a small town Patterson

Ca. I would say my learning environment at this school was the complete opposite. Cliques and gangs, people fighting in locker rooms, lots of tagging of gang signs on the walls. The school district was very poor, they barely had enough decent books for us to use. With this kind of learning environment my grades slipped and I didn't feel comfortable attending school sometimes. But in the end I did graduate and receive my diploma.

passed away. It was crucial that I finally enroll in college. Attending

MJC with the help of CalWORKs has been a smooth and wonderful journey so far. A challenge I have faced is not being able to spend time with my daughter so I can study and do schoolwork. This young developmental age is important to nature and to spend time with her. Some successes that I'm proud of are the 1st semester I received a letter congratulating me on my 3.64 GPA

and my name will be added to the prestigious President's list. Also the award I received from CalWORKs for my great GPA has kept me motivated, it is nice to be acknowledged for my hard work. CalWORKs has helped me tremendously from buying my books, giving me backpacks, and gas money to attend school. With Cal-

WORKS I use work-study and I am employed at MJC West Campus at the Great Valley Museum. CalWORKs is great, Thank you!!!



After graduation I lost my gusto for education. I took a 5 year break from education I didn't go straight to community college. Coming from a family that's big on education my mother has her B.A and my sister was working on her P.H.D. when she

Hannah Palmer

I have had to overcome many challenges to pursue my educational goals. When I first started school I was renting an apartment with two of my best friends. I was working nights full time and going to school during the day. I really struggled staying awake in class. Eventually my roommates moved away after getting married. Meaning that I had to move also. I met my ex-husband during this time. I took a break from school when we got married and when I had my daughter, who is now three. Long story short, I am now divorced and am a single mom. Because of this I have had a difficult time continuing my education. I started back to school when my daughter was two. I struggled with finding and paying for child-care on top of school expenses, commuting from home, and trying to keep my grades up while trying to be everything my daughter needs me to be. It's exhausting and terrifying. I can't afford to fail. I don't think I could do what I do without the MJC Cal-

WORKs program. Through the program I am able to get the textbooks that I desperately need to succeed. MJC CalWORKs helped me get a job on campus through work study. It has helped me with my self-confidence by helping me find a job that lets me develop transferrable skills. I get to interact with so many students. I really enjoy going to work and school. Since coming back to school and with the help of Cal

WORKs I am currently in my last semester. I apply to graduate in March and will be transferring with my AA to CSU Stanislaus. My ultimate goal is to get my Masters in Social Work. I want to set myself up so that I can provide for everything my daughter needs. Even though I am busy with the many things that occupy my time I still find the time to help serve my community. I've helped work with Boy Scouts of America and have helped complete several Eagle Scout projects. I am very active in my church and lead music every Sunday. Although I have had many challenges I look at them as learning experiences, and I have learned many things through this process.



Carolina Arroyo

Life is like a roller coaster. Well, that's how I feel about my life. I have had my share of good moments as well as bad ones. I'm twenty-six years old, and a single mom of two school-age children; my daughter, Nathalia is eight years old, and my son Daniel is seven. I was seventeen when I got kicked out of my home, and when I had my daughter. Then a few weeks later, I was involved in a major car accident that almost caused my unborn daughter's life. After being released from the hospital, my mother took me back in and cared for me throughout my pregnancy. On February 14, 2009, my daughter was born, her father and I decided to move in together and form a family. On January 3, 2010, my son Daniel was born he was two months early because I was a victim of domestic violence while I was pregnant. So, since I already had disappointed my family by becoming a mother at a young age, I stayed quiet and went ahead with my wedding. We were together for three years before we got married, and months into our marriage I finally collapsed and filed for divorce. He walked away from being a father to my children and left me with the full responsibility of raising my children on my own. He walked away and has never looked back. This situation of mine put my education on hold for six years. I wasn't financially stable to return to school and go ahead with my education. I had to work

two, three, even four jobs to make ends meet. I didn't have the option to quit work, and focus on my education. However, six years of intense work finally got to me, and one day I realized I needed to step up my education to have a better future. So, I decided to apply to MJC CalWORKs. This is my third semester back, and MJC CalWORKs has been a great resource for my success. I get the help and support I

need to focus on my education. MJC CalWORKs has helped me become the student I am now. Within these past semesters, I have earned all A's, except for two classes, and raised my GPA to almost a 3.0. MJC CalWORKs has taken a great amount of stress off my shoulders. It has covered my books, fees, and other materials I have needed to be successful in my classes. It has also helped me with childcare and counseling. The support I receive from MJC CalWORKs, their staff, and the resources have made a great impact in my education. I am on the right path to become who I want to be. Third semester back, and two more to go to carry out my AA. I am a Sociology major, and

working on my Social and Behavioral Science degree/certificate. My dream career is to become a parole agent, or a social worker in the juvenile system. I want to help others and guide them into



the right path. To show them that all obstacles in life make one stronger and are something we all go through. No one said life is easy; however, anything you set your mind to can be accomplished. Life is a beautiful struggle and thanks to my struggles I am a stronger woman with a bright future. I am not afraid to ask for help or speak my mind because communication is the key to success. It only takes one person to make a difference, and guide you through the rough stages of life. So, thanks to the support and guidance from MJC CalWORKs, students like me are able accomplish dreams, meet goals, and become successful individual. Together we can make a difference.



CalWORKs
Modesto Junior College
CalWORKs Office
435 College Avenue,
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 575-7770