



# Journey to Success

2017-2018



**Modesto Junior College  
CalWORKs Program**

[www.mjc.edu/studentservices/calworks](http://www.mjc.edu/studentservices/calworks)

# Message From MJC CalWORKs



Florida Arias  
Dean of Student Services



THE LADIES OF CALWORKS  
Back left: Judy Tuss, Brenna Bonson-Jones,  
Kathimichelle Calzada Front left: Martha Estrada,  
Mary Everhart, Anabela Delgado-Leite



Hector Duarte  
Assistant Director, CalWORKs

We are excited to share our CalWORKs Journey to 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 shared by 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 2018.



Judy Tuss & Mary Everhart  
CalWORKs Program Technicians



Christie Tinajero, Stephanie Wright,  
Emily Skinner & Jenna Deliddo  
CalWORKs Student Workers



Anthony Frias & Martha Estrada  
CalWORKs Counselors

# CalWORKs Kids on Campus



## 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, Reimbursements, Book Loans
- CalWORKs Student Support Service Center

# Emily Skinner

Hello my name is Emily Skinner and I'm twenty-four years old. I'm a single mother to a beautiful little girl named Paisley. 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.

At 18 years old, I got pregnant and thought that I would never be able to go back to school. I was going to be a single mother, with no job, and only a high school diploma to support me and my child. After finding out I was pregnant I made an appointment with a nurse midwife to check on my pregnancy and she encouraged me to continue on with my education and get a college degree. She informed me that there are so many different programs that help out with single mothers who want to better themselves and support their family while continuing on with their education. I got on TANF a little after my daughter was born and it significantly helped me and my daughter get by, but I still had a void in my life and I knew it was my education. When my daughter was a

year old, I decided to go back to school to pursue my dream career in nursing. Before starting school I did a lot of research on my local community college to find out if there was any programs to help out individuals who receive cash aid. I came across the Cal-

them for studying purposes later on. CalWORKs has also helped me with receiving priority registration, ongoing academic counseling, and work-study opportunities. Being a single mother has many challenges like finding daycare for your child, time to study, and bettering 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 3.79. I have spent countless hours studying and trying to perfect my grades in hopes to make it into the nursing program. After receiving my associate's degree in nursing I plan on taking care of my daughter, on my own, while also giving back to the community. I have benefited so much from the help of others that I want to make sure everyone else receives the same help and guidance that I received. 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 to my daughter.



WORKs program and knew that I found just what I was looking for to continue on with my education. CalWORKs has helped me pay for expensive books that I would have not been able to afford on my own and I also get to keep

# Stephanie Wright



My name is Stephanie Wright and I am working towards a Bachelors 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, because 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 jobs on campus that will work around my school schedule! They even had a counselor that 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 with gas mileage, daycare, and books has been 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 now two. I have my student teaching certificate and AA in Elementary Teaching. I am transferring to Stanislaus State in the Fall. 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.

## Patricia Romo

In May of 2017, I found myself in a situation I never thought I'd be in, unemployed due to a termination after 10 years with employer. Struggling to find a job that I can support my family as a single mother, became an ongoing issue. I realized I needed an education, college degree, or certificate to attain a good paying job. Needing additional financial assistance, I had to go to the county for help. The worst thing that was happening to me, ended up being the best, I received in-

formation about the ACT program through the county. The uncertainty that I had regarding my future, made me persevere and try to better my situation. I applied to the ACT program (EMT) and was accepted. I started my first semester January 2018, this changed my whole outlook on life, for the better. I volunteer at Doctors Hospital Manteca, to keep myself and help others stay positive, while going through tough times.





# Zohra Sadat

If someone would tell me three years ago that by now I would be two classes behind English 101, I would not believe him/her. The progression in English language that I've been having is a dream come true for me. I had no knowledge of English language or had any courage to learn three years ago. I moved to the United States with my husband from Afghanistan with no knowledge of English language at all. I could not even buy my groceries. I was always feeling embarrassed for not being able to com-

municate my problems and make a conversation. Besides, I was under the impression that one cannot learn English in adulthood because most of the immigrants whom I was interacting with at that time didn't learn English. I was also told that it was too expensive to go to school in the USA. Therefore, I spent my first year with no hope to go to school not to mention that I couldn't even dream of attempting to major in a professional area.

However, I found out that there are programs available at the MJC that offered help with education and career building. At first, I was hesitant to come to MJC and ask around because the people in my circle never attended any educational program in the US, but I decided to come and see what opportunities there were. When I came to the MJC, I was led to the CalWORKs office. When I talked to people at the CalWORKs,

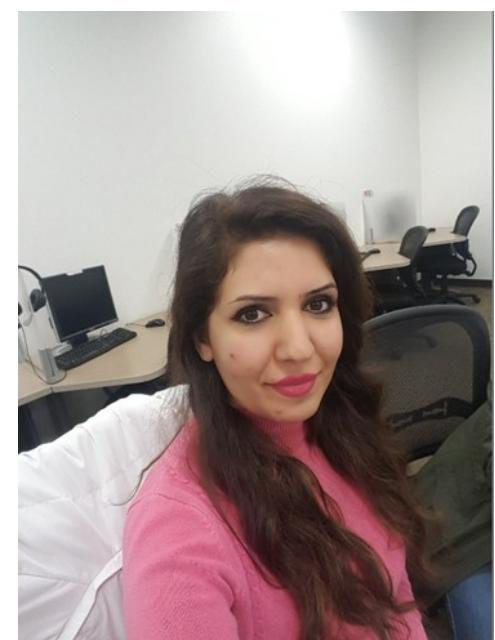
they assured me that there were ample resources to benefit from and start school. I was really surprised and motivated to find out the amount of help there were to pursue one's educational goals. With the effortless help and support of the CalWORKs staff, I started attending basic English classes. Today, I'm two classes short of English 101, and I'm on my path to take my major-related classes.

I give the due credit to CalWORKs program that has been leading me through my challenges and difficulties. They direct me to the right directions and introduce me to any financial support program that there is for parents with children. And I've been benefiting from all of these supports, and I'm grateful that I got in touch the right people to encourage me and inspire me to learn and improve despite the cultural and linguistic barriers.

## Janet Abdshowpour

When I was a teenager, I was living in my native country, Iran. I always wanted to come to America to continue my education because I heard about good benefits that America has for education, but unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to travel that time. After I graduated from high school, I could not continue my education because the expenses were so high, and my family was not able to afford it. A few years later, I got married, and my husband and I decided to travel to America. I was so happy, but when we arrived to America, I got pregnant, and my dream delayed. Final-

ly, when my daughter was born, I could enroll at MJC. I could get financial aid, and without financial aid I could not continue my education and achieve my goal because I did not work, and I had to take care of my daughter too. I also applied for the CalWORKs program and it helped me with my books, supplies, and counseling. At first, I started with ESL classes to improve my English language because English is my forth language, and I had trouble with speaking, reading, and writing. After a few months, I got better and better. My major is Business Management, and I am so



interested about it. I really appreciate MJC because of its good programs and benefits and its support.

# Amanda Garcia

I am writing this personal statement in hopes to obtain a scholarship. I have been a student since 2015 currently obtaining my A.S Office Administration. During this time I have been a single parent of a 7 year old daughter and now a 6 month old son. Challenging as it may seem being a single parent I still continued to pursue my education and will do so until I have completed my goal. Providing a better life and example for my children has always been huge reason why I chose to take these steps toward a degree. During these past 2.5 years I have experienced many hardships including in 2016 Fall, I was homeless living in-between two homes while maintain my schooling and at that time I was a student worker in Financial Aid. This was probably the most stressful time of my schooling experience. I overcame the displacement and ending up moving in with family who are currently still helping me. While being pregnant and taking classes toward my degree I had been working as a student worker in Duplicating.

My most successful progress was not giving into the daily struggles or the trials I endured during my time here at Modesto Junior College. To this day I am not giving up. I have my issues with some

need for a book for class or just advice I could depend on the staff and the student workers to help me through.

Once I complete my degree I will have the capability to apply my skills to a career in need of an A.S. I have 15 years of clerical, administration skills but soon I will be able to add a degree showing current, updated skills and commitment. I am looking forward to applying at MJC and local education based employment since I have grown to enjoy assisting and helping out the students toward their own success.



classes but I will not let that defeat me. I will continue to push through all my endeavors.

Cal-WORKS has always been a great supporter and backbone to my on-going commitment to obtaining my degree. If there was ever a

In 2015-17 I had applied my skills in helping students by helping them enroll and complete college based paperwork for over a year in Financial Aid. I assisted in New student day 16-17 and even helped students in labs.

Please take my application into consideration when reviewing for scholarship. I will put good use to the assistance and will greatly appreciate the support.

# Audrey Cervantes

Hello my name is Audrey Cervantes this is my first semester here at MJC. Deciding to continue my education after graduating from high school, nine years ago, was quite a challenge for me. I became a mother soon after and moved out of Modesto to Sacramento. I started working full time and starting paying bills. But working all of these jobs that didn't really lead to anything further, not only wasn't enough to make ends meet but it wasn't fulfilling my inner passions. I found myself really struggling after my son's dad and I had broken up. So I thought to myself in order to be a better parent and provider for my son, I needed to start seriously thinking about a better career goal and a better path to take.

With much thought and many times over weighing out the pros and the cons I choose to make, what was for me, a big change. Despite my deep reluctance I decided to move back closer to my support system. Which meant moving back to Modesto. And, the first thing I did when I moved back was taking the steps to getting

started at MJC. I know the challenges that will come of furthering my education but it will eventually lead me to greater career levels. The MJC CalWORKs program has helped me tremendously in pursuing my career goals by clearly explaining the process of signing up for MJC CalWORKs and what the



program has to offer.

The first time meeting an MJC CalWORKs counselor, he gave me an awesome backpack which came with a portable charger, pens and a highlighter (I still use the backpack to this day). They offered me transportation and a book voucher, which has saved my family and I so much money. Most important-

ly, the overall customer service they extend to you is above and beyond. I am so very thankful this program still exists today. To me, being a better parent and provider is someone who is self-sufficient and I plan to become self-sufficient. How I plan on accomplishing this is by; not giving up when classes get tough, attending classes regularly and on time using my transportation voucher, get help from my counselor when I have any questions and most importantly utilizing all that the CalWORKs program has to offer. I try to give advice to those young mothers who remind me of myself. I tell them that I truly believe that continuing to further one's education as some point in life will always be very beneficial to bettering yourself. It's never too late for anyone to go back to school and I truly believe no one is ever too old to stop following their dream. And, I can't wait for the moment I receive my diploma. Thank you MJC CalWORKs!

# Christie Tinajero



I experienced many obstacles in my life that has made success seem unattainable. In 2012 I gave birth to my first child, my son Anthony. At that time I did not have a job nor the opportunity to further my education after high school. Luckily I was able to obtain a job that helped covered our everyday living. In 2014 my sister passed away from an asthma attack leaving behind four children ages 8 months to 8 years old. In 2015 I became pregnant with twins. At three months into my pregnancy I experienced severe complications that lead to a miscarriage. Three months later I became pregnant with my daughter. Everything was going well, I had a good job and wanted to further my

education to start on my career. I signed up for school to start working on my AA for Clerical. Six months into my pregnancy the fear of another miscarriage was happening. My heart dropped with the news they gave me, I was 6-months pregnant and my daughter was ready to join the world. I told the doctors to

do whatever you have to do to save my baby. St Joseph's medical center was able to keep me pregnant 2 more days. On May 2, 2016 I give birth to my beautiful daughter Aleenah, yet again all my dreams and goals were put on hold to give all the attention to my daughter's medical complications.

Three months later I brought my daughter home, shortly after we were victims of a drive by shooting with the bullet missing me by a couple inches. I knew we had to move because the area I lived in wasn't the best, so I gathered up what I could and we moved to a safer location. I went through so much heart ache

and felt like I was never going to further my education. It felt like it was a mountain I was never going to climb. One day I just woke up and said to myself that despite my obstacles I need to go back to school, for myself and my children.

In 2017 I returned to Modesto Jr. College. I felt like this was going to be another impossible obstacle for me because I haven't been to school for 10 yrs. I felt so lost and confused. As I was walking towards my class I heard my sisters favorite song out of nowhere and it gave me the inspiration to keep on moving! I opened up to my fellow classmates and that is when I met Sharon. She told me about the CalWORKs program. I signed up and I am so thankful for this program. The CalWORKs program assisted me in buying my books, school materials, and even reimbursed my gas expense. The mountain of an obstacle became an anthill. I now have my sister as a guardian angel, my peer Sharon to guide me, and the CalWORKs program to help me. I know I could make it! I currently work in the CalWORKs office, and am in my second semester with the goal of graduating in the fall of 2019 with an AA in Clerical.



# Jazmin Zigala

My name is Jazmin Zigala. I am currently enrolled in 10 units at Modesto Jr College. I work at the Library and Learning Center at MJC on east campus. My major is nursing, and I will be done and able to apply for the pro-

gram in 2019. I am a single mother that was pregnant at 14 and have not stopped going to school ever since. Many people judged me saying I would never finish school. Thankfully with the help of the CalWORKs program I have been able to go this far in my life. The CalWORKs program has helped me reach my goals. It has supported me with my books, gas mileage, daycare and so much more. If it was not for the CalWORKs program I wouldn't be in school right now. CalWORKs has supported me big time and I

am so thankful because I am a step closer to my dream job. Being 21 and applying for the registered nurse program is amazing, because I would set a great example for those whose thought their life was over after being young and pregnant. Thank you to all who have helped me through the CalWORKs program. Soon I'll be able to help others in my career and talk about how the CalWORKs program made it possible.

## Shatece Turner

When I started MJC I was lost, depressed and had no clue what I got myself into. I just went through a lot of rough times that almost lead to suicide and I needed to find a way to get it together. Before the semester started, I got to meet with the CalWORKs staff and get set up with the services that I needed. They helped me get supplies for my classes, books and get a job. They also show a lot of love and encouragement. That kind of support helped me get through the semesters without a lot of stress. My biggest challenge was myself. I was really hard on myself and didn't have any family support to encourage me to keep pushing. I honestly didn't think I would get threw 1 semester. I would go into the office in tears sometimes overwhelmed with what was going on in some of my classes and life. CalWORKs was able to calm me down and assured me that I would be ok.

Whatever I needed to be successful, CalWORKs provided. I started MJC and CalWORKs August 2016. My goal was to finish my nursing pre-req and get my degree as fast as I can so I can apply to the nursing program. With determination and motivation, I have made it through 5 successful semesters. I will be graduation April 27, 2018 with my AA degree in Natural Sciences and applying to the MJC nursing program in May 2018. My plan's to become self-sufficient are that I am currently in the MJC CNA program to get the extra points for the nursing program. I was offered a job as a CNA right after I graduate from the program. I will work as a CNA threw the summer or until I get accepted to the nursing program. I love talking about my start here at MJC with new student's. I feel I am always paying it forward by sharing with them all the resource that MJC and

CalWORKs has to offer. I no longer work at Student Success, but they are my family and I am always taking student's there to get the help they need to start their success. I one day would like to become a motivational speaker and mentor to mom's that struggle with depression and need that extra boost to get back on track.



# Candace Smith

In 2015, through the CalWORKs program, I had the opportunity to volunteer at the Turlock Family resource center. I was a part of this program as a volunteer for a little over a year. It wasn't until I had this opportunity to help my community that I realized my passion is helping other families in need. As a volunteer, I had the privilege to assist others in completing resumes and assisting in their job searches. I feel as if I was really making a difference in the lives of not only the people I assisted, but mine as well. I remember leaving the Family Resource Center feeling inspired because I could make a difference in the world.

I first entered the Cal-WORKs program when my oldest daughter Tabitha was first diagnosed with Autism. I decided to stop school and put my life on hold to evolve hers. Two years after her diagnosis of Autism, my son Christopher was diagnosed with Oppositional Defiance Disorder and ADHD. As a single parent of three children, two with special needs, it became essential that I needed to focus on their needs entirely to guarantee their success in school and home. It was not an easy process, but through love, hard

work, and determination, we were able to move forward with our lives and I was able to go back to school and work in the summer of 2017. Tabitha graduated from the Autism program and has successfully

Christopher, I would not have found my true calling in life. My goal is to become a mental health clinician, so I may inspire and help strengthen family bonds within the community. By sharing my story with others, I feel as if I'm one step closer in making my dream a reality. I am now a full-time sociology student. I also just started a job in my field of study as a part-time case manager for the We Care program in Turlock. My three children are my greatest motivation to help me achieve my life goals and career aspirations because I want them to have something I did not receive as a child, the best quality of life that I could be provide for them.

The experience through the CalWORKs program is what ultimately guided me back on track to complete my education. My children are what inspires me to work hard every day. If it was not for these two driving forces, I would not be where I am today. I am blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of the college community and have this privilege to complete a higher education.



began school in a mainstream classroom setting. Christopher still struggles in social situations but has made great strides towards achieving his goals.

My children are my greatest inspiration to push forward in life. If it was not for Tabitha's diagnosis of Autism and working alongside with behavioral therapists with

# David Moya



I have had to face various challenges throughout my life to reach this point. Initially I was at a disadvantage having divorced parents, and often felt unwanted. I knew I was capable of doing great things, but I never had much direction or support in doing anything. One of the most difficult moments I have overcame was definitely the afternoon my youngest son, Aaron, had a near drowning incident. It took me over 3 minutes to revive him with CPR, a skill that I made sure to refine here at MJC. Another challenge was last semester when I fully ruptured my quadriceps tendon in a weightlifting accident. My wife was good enough to push me between classes in a wheelchair, finally graduating to crutches, and now I'm finally back on my feet. But I might actually say quitting my job was the hardest thing I ever did. Sometimes a fear of the unknown can hold us back more than anything.

I have undergone several

small successes to make it to this point, getting ready to graduate in this small amount of time. My first semester was only as far back as this last summer of 2017. I will be graduating this summer of 2018 with an AA-T degree, planning to attend Fresno State in the fall. Each semester was a success of its own. My 18-unit battle in the fall of 2017 had a

viscous Anatomy class that took over my life. But beyond that, it seems I've found a new hope in humanity here at MJC. In the hardened world some of us come from, it's nice to know there are still good, helpful, decent people left in the world. My peers here at MJC have helped reinforce my efforts, and shown similar interests, that the world can be a better place.

Likewise, the CalWORKs program has been essential for my success. Their financial support has allowed me to take on several extra- almost double the normal amount of units this semester. My family will never forget that this opportunity I have been given.

See, we have been self-sufficient in the past. My story is a bit different though. I have worked hard labor since my parents asked me to move out when I turned 18. Resentfully, I would

watch both my younger step-brothers being given expensive educations and doing really well, graduating from both UC Riverside and Pepperdine. I was somewhat successful (we bought a home in 2008), but there comes a point where one's body can no longer keep up with the heavy physical demands of working in a frozen food warehouse. Coupled with the fact that I had no satisfaction from a mundane occupation and wanted to do 'more' for my community, last year I decided it was time to quit and seek the resources that were available to help me seek an education. And I haven't looked back.

I have always looked to give back to my community. The first class I took was Health 110, and I was excited that we would be doing a community service project. My group that I organized was able to raise over \$500 for my son's basketball team, the Modesto California Royals Under 14 AAU basketball team, during a weekend car wash event. Most of the kids on his team require sponsors to play because they come from a rough family life. My wife and I have also coached several seasons of our kids' sports teams, and accompanied them during their summer camps as counselors. We have raised our children to understand the value of both education and physical fitness and hope to influence others similarly.

# August Frisk

A passion for learning new things and being unable to pursue a traditional education have made for an interesting life path. I grew up in poverty like many around me. I sought alternative means of learning, such as the public library, when I wanted to learn something new. An unstable home environment caused me to move around a lot, which eventually led to living on my own at 15 and not graduating high school. Thankfully, a friend told me about the California High School Proficiency Exam. I met the minimum requirements, took the test and passed. That was my relationship with school up into my adult life. My dream was to further my education and eventually become a civil engineer. This unfortunately was not something I could achieve because I needed to enter the work force to support myself.

After years of working and now with a family to support, I unfortunately fell on hard times. I did not expect to have such a difficult time finding work with my strong work history and background in management. Every non-entry-level position I applied for wanted experience along with education. With my lack of traditional education and no college experience, I could not meet their minimum requirement. Eventually I was forced to seek further assistance. Because of this sequence of events I now enjoy the college experience. The Stanislaus Community Services Agency is paying for me to attend Modesto Junior College through the Accelerated Career Training program. This amazing opportunity is something I do not believe I would have been able to pursue on my own.

Though I now have this great opportunity, there are still significant challenges I face. Transportation is one of my greatest obstacles; I rely solely on public transportation. Between waiting for a bus, riding it from Turlock to Modesto and back, and the work/school schedule that I had to plan around, riding the bus added over 15 hours to my week. When I had two classes that went past 10:30 PM, I was unable to use the bus for my trip home. I was fortunately able to get rides from classmates and from co-workers, but oftentimes I went to class

not knowing for sure if I would have a ride home that night. (Though challenging, I am grateful that this experience has helped me to see that I don't have to do everything myself and that it is acceptable and sometimes necessary to ask for help.)

Of the more difficult challenges I face, rarely getting to see my wife and children is one of the hardest. Between working two jobs, attending school, study time, and working on projects that help secure a better future for myself and my family, I have no extra time. My time at home is homework/study time. Dealing with a medical condition that keeps me in chronic pain on top of this, I find getting a full night's sleep near impossible. I have learned to set specific times in my schedule that are dedicated to spending quality time with my family because of this. (Sunday afternoons are sacred to us now.) Our time together is valued more than ever, and I feel our relationships have grown with these challenges.

One way I utilized my limited time creatively was in tutoring fellow computer science students. Wednesdays of the Fall 2017 semester I was on campus from 9:00 AM to 10:30 PM waiting between classes. This situation combined with a desire to help those around me led to volunteering my time as a tutor. I was able to tutor for a broad range of computer science courses, from more hands-on training like that of the Computer Electronics 206 and 210 courses (which cover the A+ certification) to more logical courses like the Computer Science 270 Introduction to Programming. Helping more than fifteen students during the semester gave me a great sense of accomplishment, camaraderie, and motivation. I have made great friendships I would have not made otherwise.

Work study is a great opportunity to make an extra income, but it is also feels good to give my services to the institution that has provided me with so many opportunities. Working alongside students and staff members this semester has been a great experience. On a professional level, it has provided me with many future references and connections. On a personal level, I have had the chance to make many new acquaintances and even



some close friends.

In addition to my enrollment at MJC, I am taking free online courses to expand my knowledge of computer science and electrical engineering. This not only provides information not yet available in the courses I am taking, but also provides a real-world utilization of these skills. I have completed five separate online courses in addition to the schooling so far in my two semesters here at MJC. I am currently working on two more online courses that I am scheduled to complete in conjunction with the completion of the ACT program.

This opportunity to pursue my educational dreams has been an amazing experience. I have found creative ways to continue learning over the years, but none of them have been as fulfilling as this. In the past year I have completed twenty credits while maintaining a 3.68 GPA. I will complete my certificate of achievement in the Spring 2018 semester, along with a few additional courses I added towards my eventual Bachelor's in Computer Science and Electrical Engineering. My next step after completing the Computer Network Technician Certification will be to transition from my current job in office management to one in the technology sector. The combination of this work experience and continued education will hopefully provide a new horizon of opportunities for my career and family. Having established a great foundational network through the opportunities that CalWORKs has provided, I feel more than confident I will achieve these goals.

# Rubi Perez



Since going back to school I've had my share challenges. My family had to deal with many health issues of my parents, which has not been easy to deal with. Things didn't fall into place right away, I didn't know where anything was at this new campus and didn't know where to start. The program helped me get loaned books when I didn't have my FAFSA in place. Since joining the CalWORKs program things have been a much easier process. The program has provided academic counseling which has been a huge help to keeping me on track to graduating. I don't know where I would be without my counselor's help. I

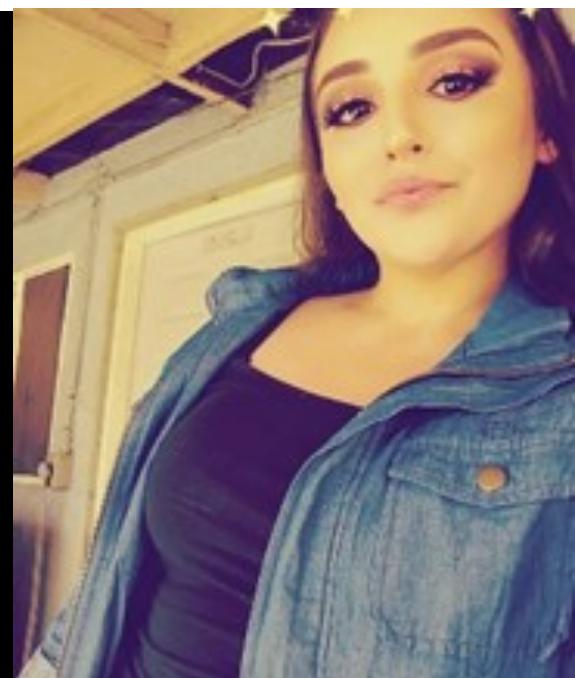
feel like I'm part of a tight community of people who are there to support you in achieving your goals. I have an educational plan that is my road map towards graduating.

What I have been doing since I started at MJC is stay focused on my goal and make sure I attend all my appointments with the program. Ask all the necessary questions. My plan to put myself in a position of where I am standing on my own two feet is to complete my AA and start working after that while I apply for the Nursing program.

# Briana Gutierrez

My Name is Briana Gutierrez I am a returning student at Modesto Junior College. Some challenges that I had to overcome to pursue towards my degree was overcoming the fear of failing and time management. Timing in college is very important procrastinating could cause you failing grades. A successful decision I've made towards my career goals is returning to school to move up in the

medical field. MJC CalWORKS has been a great help for me and my success on campus. They have helped me with transportation and book Vouchers for me to get ahead. My plan in becoming self-sufficient is to grow from my experiences and become confident and independent in my career.



# 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 five 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 assisting 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 MJC to see if there was an appointment to meet with a counselor. Not sure where to go, I wondered around feeling out of place

and overwhelmed with the thought of starting school again. Contemplating to stay or go, the CalWORKs student workers 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. I was given information on supportive services that I was unaware existed but I was eligible to use. I received help with the costs of my books, I was given transportation 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. As a participant of the program I enjoy being in close proximity to other students who are in similar walks of life. It gives me the confidence to keep pushing forward.

Suddenly I didn't feel 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 work as a student worker for the CalWORKs program. This job holds a lot of meaning to me, because at a time where I was feeling loss and defeated, it was this program that took hold of me and showed me the way.



# Christina Hughes

My name is Christina Hughes I'm 33 years old with a 12 year old daughter. I have 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. Sometimes 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 Archway 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.



# Jalil Sayed Sadat

When I came to the United States three years ago on a refugee status, I could not even imagine that one day I could go to school and pursue my education because before moving to the US I was hearing so many negative comments from people around me that it was impossible for a person to support his/her family financially and be able to gain education at the same time because one could hardly survive by working two or three jobs a day. This notion seemed true to me for the first year of my stay in the US because I had to work long hours to pay my bills and I was not able to make any time to go to school. Besides, I had heard that the cost of tuition was too high to afford. However, when I heard that there are sources that are there to help people with dreams to pursue their education, I rushed to find out. I came to MJC and started asking around to get the help to start my

education. I was directed to MJC CalWORKs office by both the staff of MJC and MJC students who were benefiting from the program. I remember the first day when I walked at the front desk and didn't know what sort of help I may receive to start school, but the warm welcome of the receptionists and the wise counseling that



I received, inspired me enough that it was possible for me to start school again! That was when I applied through CalWORKs office and got enrolled to MJC as a student and started my new goal and new path for life.

Right now, I'm on my second year at the MJC, and I'm pursuing my education in computer science field. I have completed more

than 50-unit credit classes so far, and I'm on my way to transfer to one of my favorite universities, UC Davis or CSU Sacramento to pursue my bachelor's degree there. This would've not been possible for me if I didn't receive the help of the CalWORKs program.

The success and the progress path toward my future in education is moving on a smooth speed with all the support and help of the CalWORKs programs and their wise counseling sessions. They have also helped me build

my career path by helping me get a job as a Teacher's Aid at the GED department. Through student-worker program, I'm building my resume and getting enough experience in tutoring and teaching which paves the way for me to get more involved with education system and build my way to become a teacher on day.

# Sarah-Ann Taporco

Many challenges have been presented along my path to pursue my degree at MJC. Looking back on my first few semesters during 2011-2012 has shown me how unprepared I was to take on a higher education. I dropped out multiple times leaving F's and W's on my transcript. My previous lack of self-discipline and motivation would not be sufficient enough to accomplish my goals at MJC. Each failed semester brought disappointment in myself and self-doubt that I would ever achieve what I desired out of life. By far the biggest challenge was becoming pregnant and then a young mom. Becoming a parent to me meant I had to overcome everything I was letting hold myself back from becoming a successful student. As a young single mom, I have struggled with balancing every aspect of my life to make success at MJC a possibility. Being a parent and a student has required serious dedication of my time and effort. It has not been an easy journey.



As I have progressed towards my educational and career goals I have had many successes. I have learned that my failures have shaped me into a better and more capable person and student. Coming back to school and succeeding at things that I have previously failed at has shown me my true potential. Each failure showed me how to build a smarter work ethic and the strength in being more resilient. Each time I wanted to give up, I learned how to find the motivation to keep pursuing my goals. I now see the value of facing my difficulties with integrity and being dedicated to my ambitions more than ever. It has been extremely rewarding and personally enriching to see my growth as a person overall.

It would have been very difficult to achieve my goals without the help of the MJC CalWORKS. It has eliminated a lot of the barriers to receiving a higher education. My lower middle-class background and the types of income that are available to me have presented difficulties in accessing a higher education. I am extremely grateful for the opportunities MJC CalWORKS has provided, because they have eased the financial hurdles of receiving the education I have desired to pursue here at MJC. The amount of support I have received through this program has played a major role in my success.

Earning my Associates of Science Degree in Biology Preparation at MJC is my first major step to becoming self-sufficient. My next major step will be transferring to a four-

year college in Fall 2019 to earn my Bachelors of Science Degree in Sustainable and Environmental Design. Each of these degrees will be used to embark on new career avenues. Without attaining these degrees that will build my educational skill set, pursuing these career avenues would be beyond my ability to reach. Once I become capable of pursuing my dream career through my educational path, I will be better able to support myself and my family.

I am a previous student of MJC's BRIDGE program. Throughout my time as a BRIDGE student, I was presented with opportunities to participate in volunteer activities. I learned the value of offering my time to support different organizations that enrich my local community. I spent time volunteering at the Stanislaus pet shelter and at MJC fundraising events. During my semester in BRIDGE, I also learned how to build my leadership skills through my enrollment in MJC's "Student Leadership Development" course. These lifelong success skills I learned and applied within this program continue to be applied to every aspect of my life.

Earning this scholarship would be another accomplishment to help support my educational goals. My hard work to overcome every challenge I have encountered thus far has fueled my ambitions and my motivation to keep working towards my dreams. I know I am the only person who can be responsible for making my dreams come true, and I want to take every opportunity to make them a reality. This scholarship is one of those opportunities to bring me closer to my personally defined success.

# Teresa Mejia

Imagine waking up every morning feeling insecure and lonesome having to tend to three small children, do college level homework, work part time, and tend to your own needs. My name is Teresa Mejia, I am a mother of three children: a six-year-old, a two-year-old and a one-year-old. I am a full-time student, working part time through the federal work study program. Due to my current financial situation I have had to apply for welfare and I am receiving food stamps and cash aid through the CalWORKs program. My husband is currently in the process of adjusting his immigration status, so I am the sole provider of our household and currently taking care of things by myself here in Modesto (school, work, children, home duties, etc.) while he is in El Salvador as of October 2017 waiting for his VISA interview at the US Embassy.

One of the challenges that I have overcome to reach this point in my life is post-partum depression. It began during my third pregnancy, I had just given birth to my son in May of 2015 and I thought to myself, "this birth control sure seems to have a lot of pregnancy-like symptoms". Sure enough the method had backfired, and little did I know that I was expecting my daughter who was to be born in March of 2016. After giving birth to her I experienced, for the first time in my life, a loss of control over my emotions and I became suicidal. It turns out that all the past trauma I had experienced in my life had caught up to me at a time where I was the most vulnerable.

Time management has been another challenge that I have had to overcome. It is very difficult to manage time, and with all the extra work I have cut out for me, it has become an actual hardship. I feel terrible not to be able to stay at home and raise my children, but since we need the money I persist on my path every day since I would, ultimately, like to provide them with a fulfilled financial future. I want my children to have a healthy upbringing without abuse and therefore, I take the extra time and effort that is in my power to accomplish this. It is not an easy task to make healthy (child-appealing) meals, to provide them with quality entertainment

(not sitting in front of a screen), and to discipline them in a wholesome manner (not hitting). This leaves little time to nourish myself, but I buy out the time day after day.

Another challenge that I had to overcome to pursue my degree is being brought up in a single parent household. My mother was a single parent of ten children. She immigrated to the United States when I was 7-years-old and worked hard to give my brothers and I good nurture and strong values. Despite having a strong,



hardworking role model, having basic needs was a challenge for us so I ended up dropping out of high school my senior year to work full time to help provide for my younger brothers and sisters. This led me to a dead-end job, a victim of abuse and a failed marriage. Years later I met my second husband and after having our first child I went to Adult School to obtain a High School Diploma. It was really encouraging to walk on stage and receive that diploma with my fellow graduates. This motivated me to pursue higher learning. I enrolled and attended Modesto Junior College, where after 12 years out of school I continued, what I believe to be, the correct path for success.

While attending MJC I met several individuals who helped and encouraged me through some rough periods of my life. This really helped me to stick it out be-

cause, there have been several occasions where I have just felt like giving up. I will never forget a gentleman by the name of Hector Duarte. During the time that I was going through post-partum depression I was in Hector's office telling him how I felt completely useless, I wanted to just drop out, and that I could not handle anymore. Hector was completely blunt when he told me that I was doing great in my classes (he even reminded me that I was on the Dean's List) and that I would be very foolish to not pursue my educational goals. I mean the exact words he told me escape me at this moment, but I recall something about if he could hit me on the head with a book, or something like that. He might not have realized it at the time, but Hector's kind words made me realize how fortunate I was to have been able to come out of the ghetto and into the college life. He is a perfect example of the encouragement, advice, motivation and positive ambiance available at the Modesto Junior College CalWORKs program.

Being a first-generation college student was another challenge I overcame, and I now consider it to be a success. I feel proud and eager to make a difference and to become a value to my family, my community and in turn, to society. My intended major is Administration of Justice. I have always been good at reading, comprehension, and dealing with difficult situations. I have learned not to be judgmental and I try hard to be constructive and not to cause harm to anyone. In my endeavor I have also taken some child development classes, to be a better parent to my children. This has made me realize that I want to use my skills to help children. My dream is to practice law and advocate for children's rights. I plan on seeking an administrative position in the Stanislaus Superior Court system while I pursue my law degree.

I currently partake in the School Site Council at Bret Harte Elementary, where my daughter attends 1<sup>st</sup> grade. I also volunteer as a chairman in the Parents Committee at my younger children's school Muncy Early Head Start. I look forward to participating in future community events as I get better at managing my time.

# Firas Abdulrazzaq



When I first start to overcome my degree many challenges was facing me. The most important challenge was the language, English is not my first language, so it was very hard to me to keep up with the teacher since I was not understanding 40% of what they were saying, but I could keep up by using the dictionary, I was translating everything and learn-

ing new words every day, also, I had other challenge which is the time, I need to distribute my time between college, work and family which it was very difficult but I was study all the night till 2 or 3 AM and go to work by 8.

My very important success that I had in making progress toward my educational and career goal was learning the language very good, and learn a lot about the administration science which I was always love to learn, also the study give me the knowledge to help my kids in school with their homework.

But for all that success someone very important was standing behind me and support me all the way which is the MJC CalWORKs program, they helped me financially through the books, trans-

portation and the consultation, helped me with prior registration the education plans which they prepare to us, I can't count all the things they did and still doing to me but all I can say thanks from all my heart.

With the language I learned and the degree which I will have I am planning to apply for a good job which can make me self-sufficient and could afford my family life, Also, I'm planning to keep moving forward in my studies and improve my skills through the trainings and readings.

During my studies I could involve in a lot of community service like translating and logistics to new refugee people who can't speak English and don't know locations by helping world relief NGO and Stanislaus County.

## Kimberly Quarles

My name is Kimberly Quarles and I decided to go back to school Fall of 2016. Since then I hit the ground running, tackling every life obstacle thrown my way. I remember getting news that my father had a stroke and was in the hospital way in New York. This was Fall of 2017. At the time, I was half way done with my anatomy class, one of the hardest class I have ever taken in my life. I spent hours on top of hours studying to get my B up to an A. However, when I found out my Dad was on his death bed, I broke down. I wanted to quit, I wanted to give up. I wanted to just stop everything I was doing, get on a plane and go to New York. I then realized that I had come too far to just throw it all away. My father once told me that he was proud of me for pursing my nursing degree and I did not want to let him down. Also I am single mother of two children. I am all that my kids have, if I fail, so do they so failing is not an option. I ended up finishing my anatomy class with an A. Despite everything going on around me, in that moment I was happy, and I had a new profound strength. Going into spring semester, my mind was thinking "nothing can stop you". I got a phone call from my brother on January

2<sup>nd</sup> 2018 that our father had passed. I was sad and heartbroken. I felt defeated but I kept going. And I keep on going. My story is still being written but I can definitely say that in my story I will be a nurse.

I have had a lot of success in making progress toward my educational goals. I am maintaining A's in my classes. Staying on top of my homework and finding study time is a major key. I have learned to balance my time so that I have time to spend with my kids and do fun activities with them, while working and going to school.

MJC CalWORKs program is such a great program and I am thankful for it. This program is the reason I am doing so well in school. They have provided me with a counselor who went over an educational plan. I use the educational plan as a tool to stay on track. Also they provide funds for my books. I would struggle a lot more if I didn't have the financial assistance. MJC CalWORKs program helped me find a job on campus which was a huge blessing to me and my children, and they provide any additional services that I may need such as mileage and reimbursements for the parking pass. The ladies in the office go above and

beyond to make sure I am successful.

My plans to become self-sufficient is to keep moving forward and never giving up. I plan to finish school and get a nursing degree.

I want to be able to provide for my children and give them a life I never had. They are the future, and I want their future to be great.

I am involved in my community in different ways. I am involved in the CARE program here on campus. Within that program is the CARE council and I am co president of it. The CARE council mentors other students within the program. I also volunteer at my church Big Valley either on Saturday night or Sunday morning in children's ministries.



# Jessica Mendonca

Being a student has never been easy for me. Enrolling at Modesto Junior College after not attending school for 15 years was very overwhelming. Having motivation this time was going to be easier so I thought. I was a new mom and my son had been diagnosed with special needs. I told myself I needed to educate myself is the only way my family and I to be successful. I wanted to get my A.A. in Early Childhood Development. I know that in order to pursue my educational goals to work with young children, I was going to face some challenges. Being a mom with a child with special needs and being a successful student was one challenge balancing my son needs with the needs who needs me to be attentive to him while also attending classes and doing my homework was difficult for me. But I did it! My first semester I had 4.0 I've overcome the fear of not being good enough and being too old to go back to school. I went and saw a counselor and I told them I need to take a Guidance class in order to be successful. Nothing was available so I took study skills 78. This class taught me all about mindsets and how to be a successful

student. I did this pushing myself in a positive way to be successful for myself and my family.

I am now in my second year of college, I have completed all my core child development classes. I am currently applying for an Associate

special needs.

MJC CalWORKs program has been key to my success. The staff and student workers are very knowledgeable and passionate about helping students. CalWORKs has guided me and encouraged me to keep pushing for my goals and reaching for my dreams. The services that were provided to me I found very helpful book vouchers, parking vouchers, gas reimbursement and counseling services has help me profoundly in my success as a student.

I plan to be self-sufficient upon receiving my Certificate for Teachers Associate by applying myself to be an advocate for families with special needs. When I received my parent to parent education program I received a job offer from Parent Partnership to become an advocate and support families during their child's IEP meetings.

I've been advocating for my own child for three years. I've also advocated for myself. I've learned from my own support team how to be supportive and encouraging to help other families like my own. It's my pleasure and passion to help others.



Teacher Certificate. I've received a certificate of completion for a thirteen week parent to parent education program. I also completed educate, equip and support class to help me with my dream of becoming a advocate for families and children with

# Kristina Modena



I am a single mom to a wonderful seven-year-old boy. I tried several times to go to college, but life always happened. The first time I tried coming back, I found out that I was pregnant, and my pregnancy was very high risk, so school had to be put on hold. The next time I tried going to school, I found out that my rent was going up, so we had to find a new place to live. The

next time was in 2014 but my dad got sick and passed away and it was really hard on me. My dad was very important to me. He believed I could be successful at college and always pushed me to go. When I lost him, I got really depressed. I was able to get through that but then shortly after, in 2016, I lost my job that I'd had for 12 and half years. It was rough, but also a blessing in disguise. It took a lot for me to swallow my pride and apply for assistance through welfare. I went through their job readiness program and Pamela Kinser, the worker who directed my class, was the one who pushed me to apply for school. I am so thankful that she did. She pushed me to pursue my dream of becoming a teacher. I am now in my third semester and have been able to obtain a 4.0 GPA. I am also working part time on campus while taking classes. It has

been challenging to maintain balance between school, work, and my son but I am doing it. I am so thankful for the MJC CalWORKS program. I know that without their help and support I would not be able to afford school and all my responsibilities as a mom. The program is wonderful, and I had no idea they would be this much help to me. The staff is amazing and always has an answer to my questions. I wish I had more time to participate in community service and extracurricular activities. I am a mandatory reporter and have completed the background check to be able to help and volunteer at my son's school as much as I can. I am so excited to be the first one in my family to obtain my bachelor's degree and hopefully, once I can obtain a teaching job, pursue my master's degree.

# Maricela Sanchez

My name is Maricela Sanchez. I am striving for my Psychology degree. Since I first started college, I have had to learn to keep my anxiety under control. It has been my biggest struggle. Adapting to all the changes, especially having to be around professional people was very intimidating for me. I felt less of a person surrounded by intelligent human's. I had to learn to accept the fact I was here to learn and become as dedicated as the rest. Trying to fit in was not easy! Even if I struggle to learn, and it may

take me many tries to get things right I will stay positive as well as seek help. I make sure to show up every day and give it my 100% focus. I was fortunate to have been accepted into the CalWORKs program, where they have been the biggest help and support throughout my education journey. Raising both my children alone has been tough, financially and mentally. I always wonder how I will make ends meet. CalWORKs has helped me with many of my expenses, which I am so grateful for. CalWORKs always

makes sure that as a student, I have all my school supplies, and Educational plan ready to be successful in conquering my degree.



# Julie Raya

Life can be very challenging, but the greatest challenge I have met thus far, has been choosing to keep going forward. When I look back, I see the heartache and pain that I have endured and overcome.

It all began when I was 6 years old. My father (The only man who ever showed me love and affection) was sentenced to double life in prison. Growing up, my mother was my role model. However, something in my mind told me I needed that older-male figure back in my life. At the age of 16, I met the man of my dreams while at party. He was 26 and I was 16 at the time, but coincidentally we had both lied about our ages. To him I was 18, to me he was 21. The void in my heart was finely being fulfilled. Had I found the love of my life? It seemed so. Life was just perfect. I had a great job, a great boyfriend and we even talked about starting our own family. To show me how special I was, he would wake me up with kisses and take me on weekend get-away's. Even as independent as I was, he would take me on shopping sprees and always make sure I had everything I had ever needed and wanted. I must admit, I lived like a queen for the first few years of our relationship. I had become so dependent on him. I felt it was too good to be true. Fast forward a few years, pregnant with his child, the fairy tale facade quickly washed away. I was 7 months pregnant when the federal agents came into our home and invaded our safety net that I thought we had created for each other. I felt so violated and betrayed. My sons crib was thrown far across the room and the tiny little outfits we had picked out together where on the floor. Only one week prior, we had just invited our entire families out to the ultrasound place to reveal the babies gender. I knew we both had issues but how could he hide such a gruesome lifestyle from me, his partner, his love? Our whole relationship was built upon lies. He was taken away and sentenced to ten

years in federal prison. I was left alone with a new baby in this cold heartless world.

My life was seeming to be as dramatic as a soap opera. Following the departure of my husband, I was struggling with post-partum depression. My emotions were all over the place and I felt as if my life was as significant as only a grain of sand. I struggled with contemplating suicide on several occasions. Luckily, I had my mom to guide me back from my own dark thoughts. These where thoughts that told me I was better off not here on this earth. I often fought these thoughts by attempting to wash them out with alcohol. I felt like I needed help psychologically, but I knew I needed financial assistance. So, I tried going back to work. However, my great job was out the window and every other 'okay job' I encountered, required me to find a full-time baby sitter. Life had decided to throw one problem after the other my way. Hence, I soon found myself on the far end of my career spectrum. I was now a welfare recipient. After my two-year exemption in CalWORKs, I was required to begin my Welfare to Work clock. Finding myself on this side, I was now the student and not the teacher. I could see life from multiple perspectives. I could relate to it on various levels. Along the way, I met amazing individuals whom themselves had gone through their own obstacles and overcame them. My son was two years old now and the welfare to work program was going to assist in paying my child care fees. Things where starting to look up for the both of us. He was off to daycare, and I was off to school MJC (Modesto Junior College). Who would have thought school was for me? Nobody said it would be easy right? There I was, homework filled nights, dirty dishes in the sink, and dirty diapers in the trash. But. It was all worth it. My son was in a safe and secure environment where he was learning his social

and educational skills, and I was in the process of finding a balance between motherhood and school. I began working in the CalWORKs office of MJC. The

students I helped were CalWORKs participants, like myself. I gained many life-long friends through CalWORKs and began to receive the right recourses that would eventually help me be less dependent on the system. I have begun to appreciate the little bit of light that shines on my darkest days.

Please allow me to fast forward for a preview of my future. After graduation, my plans are to score moderately high on the LSAT's and apply for law school. I'm not too sure where this degree will lead me, but I know it's something great! I have always known that I can do anything I put my mind towards. But, this can only happen if I pick up right where I left off and keep going forward. With the many challenges life has strengthened me with, I am now able to help others who are lost. My assurance in helping others comes from knowing exactly how it feels to have everything that one has ever wanted, and then suddenly, it is pulled right out from under their feet. When this happens, we must choose to go forward and not go back. We must reflect on the strengths we have gained through these times. Be grateful for the people that have been placed in your life, and for the ones who have been removed. I would not be where I am today had it not been for CalWORKs pushing me to go forward and make something great of myself. If you believe you can do it, you can overcome any challenge that comes your way. The power lies within you.



# Valenteen Goreal

Students study hard and put in hours and hours of homework, typing up essays and research projects, all to get the ultimate trophy presented to them on graduation day. Pursuing an academic path already has its challenges. Add to that the title of a single parent and sole provider, that path now looks like you have just been sucked into the world of Jumanji. My name is Valenteen. I have two amazing daughters; five-year-old Izabella and three-year-old Adrielle. We three musketeers have faced a hard year in 2017 consisting of loss, and overcoming that loss with resilience. I go to work and take prerequisite classes in order to apply for the nursing program. It seems like a simple task. However, add to that the responsibilities of being a parent, maintaining a household, and finding the hours needed for class work and study time, it is now a harder task to accomplish. I have no babysitters or help of any kind. If I want that trophy, I have to sacrifice more and figure out how to accomplish it on my own. No one can get through Jumanji on their own. It's because of CalWORKs however, that I even have the opportunity to try: Try to provide for my family without any

other individual's assistance. Try to get through my prerequisites to apply for the nursing program with the extra study time available to me now. The program has provided preschool for my girls so that I am able to go to school and work. It has provided counseling so I can successfully accomplish my academic responsibilities in addition to school supplies that are not covered by any

have the luxury right now to volunteer, but I try to help as best as I can with what I have to offer to anyone that knows me. My manager is just one of the friendships that I've made. She has been a solid rock in my life when words of wisdom escaped my family and friends. She has been able to calm the storms and if not, remind me of the tools needed to survive until the storm passes.

My support group grew and I have the CalWORKs program to thank for that. I used to be a stay-at-home mom and I decided to go back to school so I can be able to help support my family. I'm very thankful that I made this decision because now I'm a single mom of two and only two classes away from applying to the nursing program. My hope is

that when my daughters grow up they can better understand what the three of us went through, how far we've come, how much we've accomplished, draw strength from the past, and realize the only thing that can stop them from succeeding is themselves.



financial aid I may have been awarded. To my surprise, the program provided something I was not expecting when I first applied: Friendship. I have had the honor of making the acquaintance of a few individuals I have worked with that are now my lifelong friends. I am one of the first people they call when they have car trouble, need proof reading, or a babysitter. I don't

# Mohammad Sabir Abdulrahimzai

As a human being everyone has the right and desire to have a bright future to do the best for his/her self and family. And education is one of the main and basic factor to reach your goals. After a year and a day my dream came true that I could apply for MJC, which was one of my desire to study in the United States. So I didn't miss the chance. As I was new with the system, rules, regulations, process and wasn't sure how and from which point I need to start. After gathering some information from the internet/MJC site, phone calls, relatives and friends didn't full fill my concerns and questions.

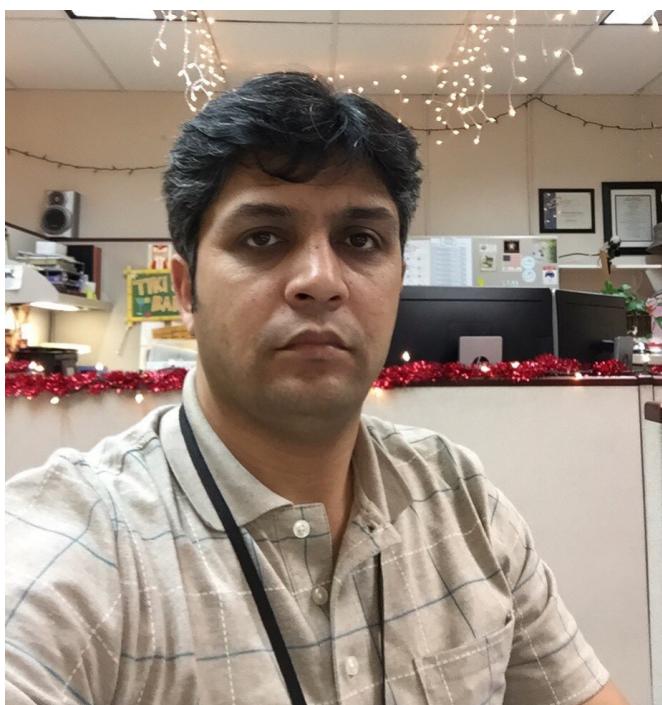
First of all it seemed very hard and I was very nervous to whom I need to talk, will somebody help and instruct me to the right way or not. Somehow I en-

couraged follow the line to be checked in to see someone. The front desk lady realized that I was new, so she talked to me very smoothly asked me to wait you will be called. After 10-15 minutes wait I was called by my last name which is really hard to pronounce. One of the staff member start questioning me about my traveling from Afghanistan to USA. Arrival date, ID/Driving License, utility bills, car insurance, proof of residence and so on.

Asking these questions made me more nervous, uncomfortable and impossible to be enrolled here. As am naturally a little bit impatient I wanted somehow get red of here, here I should admit that high education teach you all good qualities as I noticed on the staff member face and reactions. After recording all infor-

mation she talked to me in a very simple and easy way. What documents should provide and whom I should handover. During this period she provide me the list and steps I need to follow one by one even she instruct me if still I am unable to do it, there are some people on West Campus Pathway you can get help. As everything and all these process were new for me.

Therefore, I went to West Campus Pathway to follow my enrollment steps luckily a very nice gentleman welcomed me, after his instructions I completed all my process next day passed my assessment tests of English/math. But unfortunately due to unawareness of paying math tuition fee I was dropped from my math class which disappointed me. I was thinking financial Aid will directly pay it. Anyhow thanks at least I joined MJC. On first day of my class I realized the difference of standards. Here it makes you why you are a student and what are responsibilities. How nice instructors compelled you to be active and how to struggle to be the best. During this limited time I learned a lot even I am encouraging my friends to join MJC. I love the method the system making you well organized in your life, I have several source to learn all MJC Administration, staff members, counselors, librarians, bookstores, CalWORKs members are there ready to help and solve your problems and guiding you to the right path to follow your major goals. Now I can say that soon I will get my major plan of being a qualified nurse, so I can help people in a very good and professional manners.



# 2016-2017 MJC CalWORKS Award Winners



**Jenna Deliddo**  
**Student of the Year**



**Christina Hughes**  
**Most Improved**



**Joan Tajon**  
**Inspirational Award**



**Randi Osburn**  
**L.I.G.H.T Award**



**Aida Trejo & Tanya Smith**  
**EOP&S**  
**Partnership Award**



**Ashley Lengling**  
**CalWORKS "Journey to**  
**Success Scholarship"**  
**Winner**

# Soroptimist "Live Your Dream" Scholarship Winners



## 2018 Winners



**Emily Skinner**



**Shatece Turner**



**Celene Ramirez**



**Marisela Sanchez**



**Jacqueline Barraza**



**Candace Smith**



**Annmarie Freeseha**



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