

Springdale Job Corps – My Story

By Bianca Mendoza

Yakima, Washington is where I grew up; a place that made me feel unsure, insecure, happy and scared. A place that changed me into a person I thought I would never be. I had a lot of good and bad experiences. I was blessed with two sons that were the miracle I needed to help me understand that it was time to grow up. However, and even with my new bundles of joy, it took me 3.5 years to realize that the party life and the people I was surrounding myself with were not going to get me anywhere. I had lost myself in a deep sleep.

Finally, I woke up to a tunnel with no end. I felt so alone and clueless. I knew that it was me who put myself in this dark place. I blew away all my family members and they lost all respect they had towards me. Walking through the darkness, I had these suicidal thoughts going through my head. I tried so many times before but it never worked out. I asked God, “Why?” but got no answer. I was stuck wondering why I was here. I was blessed to have talked to an old friend of mine that day. He opened my eyes and made me realize that I was not alone. He talked to me and said, “This is going to hurt you, but you have to get away. You turn left, there is no one. You turn right, still no human. You look back and still no sight of anyone. Look forward, no one is blocking your way. You have all the space in the world and you will keep walking alone, but at least no one will stop you.” This conversation happened a little after I had gone to my orientation at Job Corps. My entry date was coming so slow, and I didn’t know if I could make it until then.

Finally, at a slow day of work I asked myself if this was where I was going to be working at for the rest of my life; turning apples, sorting, getting yelled at for no reason, my lunch break

finally came. I went to my locker to get my phone. I missed call and a voicemail. I checked my voicemail, it was Reggie Diaz with the best news in my life, aside from when I found out my first baby was a boy. He told me that my entry date was September 14, 2015, at a Job Corps Center a little far from my so called home. My heart pounded. I jumped up and down, and told my friend. I hugged her and gave my two week notice right then and there. I went home and told my parents about how I am finally going to get my life together. They were so proud, and I could see the joy light up in their eyes. I told my kids, but they did not fully understand. Alberto (AJ) and Julian were only 4 and 5 years old, so it was hard to see the puzzled looks on their faces when I told them I would be going away to school for a little while. It was hard for me to accept that I was doing this so late in life, but it is never too late to make the right choice.

As I packed my things, threw away old stuff, and gave away things I wouldn't need, everything became more real. I closed my eyes and got flash backs. I told myself that it's time I make myself proud, and show everyone that I can change and get things done. It was hard to leave my two little men, but I knew I had to give them a better future. I wanted to set a good example and show them that it is never too late to be strong.

When my entry date was finally here, I waited anxiously and had my last good meal. I told my mom I was going to miss her, as well as my dad and my two little monkeys. As I arrived at the Greyhound, I started getting shaky and told myself not to have a nervous breakdown. I was in tears as I held my mom tight, telling her that I love her and saying thanks for everything and handling my rebel life. I promised to make my mom proud. She left me there and my old friend showed up. He hugged me real tight and told me that he believed in me and he admired how strong I was. I got on the bus, still really nervous, but I couldn't wait to finally go to Springdale Job Corps. It felt like the longest bus ride of my life.

I finally got to the Portland stop and retrieved my luggage. I saw Scott and Aundrea, one of our security guards, and a student. I could hardly talk, but managed to say hi. They kindly received me, but I still felt like I was going to pee my pants because of how nervous I was. When I got into the car it was another 20 minutes of wondering “Am I going to be liked? Are they going to accept me? Is it going to feel like jail?”

When we finally arrived I got a tour. So far, so good, but still with the nervous breakdown feeling. I got into the Lakeside Hall and everything looks huge. I finally got into my room after a lot of walking around saying hi to everyone. They were so welcoming and I definitely started feeling more comfortable .

Three weeks of CP felt like forever because I was so excited to get started in my trade and my academics. Finally, it ended and at that Monday morning meeting, they said that we were going to finally start our trades and that they were going announce the CP student of the month. Danny took forever on his speech, but when he said my name I was super proud. I called my mom and told her. Even through the phone I could feel her happiness.

I have been working really hard. I am at 63% in Office Administration, I got privilege to move into the honors dormitory, and I was student of the month for October in Lakeside Hall. I T.A.B.E.'d out of reading with 3 grade levels higher than when I first took the test. I reached a little higher on the level system, so I am no longer an entry. I am in copper and working my way up to my goal of platinum. I have 6 leaderships and no negative points. I am about to start on work base learning, yet I have only been here for three months.

All of those nervous breakdowns were so worth it. It was finally my time to shine, and even if I don't have my whole family on my side, at least I have the four that mean the world to

me; my mom, my dad and my two boys. I can prove that I can become a better person and keep myself away from all the negative people.

I am making a big plan to stay here in Oregon, but it is too soon to decide where I really want to live. Maybe I'll go back into Washington, but live in a different city, like Seattle. I want to work at a middle school, but if not then maybe at a legal or medical office. There are a lot of goals I am setting for myself, but where ever I end up is fine as long as I can work at a job that I will enjoy. It doesn't even matter how much I get paid, as long as I can see my kids and dedicate time to them, come home from work with no stress and be happy with what I am doing on daily basis. I am just glad that I came into Job Corps. I am in love with the progress I am making.

Once again, thank you Job Corps. I will finish this program proud, happy, and extremely grateful. I finally believe that there are second chances.

Sincerely,

Bianca Mendoza