

Winona Head Start Success Story

By: Sharmaine Johnson

My Head Start Story

My name is Sharmaine Johnson. I am a single mother to a beautiful 4-year-old boy named Tyler. I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to be recognized for all that I have achieved in such a short amount of time. I have been struggling with chronic pain and health issues since the birth of my son; this was not an easy task. My strength to overcome those challenges came from my faith in the Lord and my love for Tyler. God gave me strength and helped guide me along the way.

Head Start has helped me to achieve my goals. The support from Head Start and information given to me has been amazing. Tyler's first year in Head Start, I wanted to find a job, obtain my driver's license and help him be fully potty trained. We sat down, made a plan on how everyone could help Tyler and by the end of the school year Tyler had it all down. I wanted to improve my family life because I found myself unhappy with the way things were. I had lost my job and was unemployed for the first time in almost six years. I did not know how I was going to provide for myself and for my son.

I believe it was at that very moment when I was feeling my lowest that God placed wonderful people in my life to open my eyes to new possibilities. They helped me see that I had so much more to offer in customer service. It was time for a new beginning. I enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant training. At the end of the training I took the State exam and became certified. I then decided to go back to school; I chose the Health Coordinator at Minnesota State College Southeast Technical. My last semester, I added a second major Medical

Secretary. During my year and a half at school I was honored on the President's List and graduated with honors on December 14, 2013. After graduation I began working at Winona Health as a CNA.

September 2013 brought an update to family goals. I practiced driving over the summer with help from my church family. I was set to take the road test September 24th, 2013. I went for my test and was unsuccessful. After more practice, I made another appointment to take the road test. On October 29th, 2013 I took it again and this time I passed! I finally obtained my driver's license and was able to get a car. It took some time, but at the age of 30 I can officially say I am a Minnesota driver! I was able to buy my first new car. Last but not least, I am no longer working as a CNA; instead I am now working in my field. Not too long ago I was offered my dream job. I started my first official day as a Health Unit Coordinator at Winona Health on January 6th, 2014. I dared to dream bigger for my family. Everything I do is for my son. He makes me want to work harder.

I cannot thank God enough for providing for my family. I know that God has also given me this awesome opportunity to be recognized. In Jeremiah 29 verse 11 it says "For I know the plans for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" For nothing is impossible with God." I am living proof of this because even through my pain and struggles I have accomplished amazing things for myself and my family. Our future is bright. I would like to thank Head Start for believing in me and for all of their help.