

THE SUCCESS OF BONNIE JACKSON-HARRIS

Hello my name is Bonnie Jackson-Harris. I'm a proud mother of 3 young men. When I came to work with SE Michelle for the Supported Employment Service Program at Mid-Columbia Center for Living I was upset and depressed due to the removal of my 3 sons in 2010. The courts had taken them from our home because of the neglect and abuse of their father, my husband. I have been able to get my 2 oldest sons home but my youngest is still in foster care. I wanted to prove that my sons mean everything to me and I was determined to find employment, my own apartment and my self-esteem. I wanted to prove to myself, my family and friends that I am capable of more in my life.

SE Michelle and I met once weekly for the first couple months to work on my employment goal, master application and resume. SE Michelle helped me to complete written and online applications for jobs that were available. I appreciated how every time SE Michelle and I met she would listen to my concerns about going back to work and encourage me to keep motivated. SE Michelle picked me up and took me to an interview after I had received a discouraging call that my son was going to be moved from his foster home in Hood River to a foster home farther away in La Grande. I was upset and SE Michelle asked if I needed to reschedule the interview but then reminded me why I was looking for work to begin with. So I spent the 20 minutes in the car talking out my disappointment and SE Michelle listened. I made it through the interview and SE Michelle told me how proud she was and how strong she thought I was and that she believed in me. I feel I may not be where I am today if I did not go through with the interview that day.

I have had a few interviews and some work experience since my first interview and I have finally found the job that makes me happy. I am a proud employee at the Goodwill Donation Center in Hood River. I work Friday-Tuesday from 10:00am-7:00pm and sometimes work extra shifts to help with coverage. I love being able to know that I have a job to go to and enjoy the people I work with. I like being part of a team. I try to be positive and uplifting when at work and inspire others to be grateful for what they have. I have changed in so many ways after going to work. I am proud of myself. I can pay my own bills and I feel independent for the first time in so many years. I think the most amazing part is when I get to talk with my youngest son on the phone and he tells me "I'm so proud of you mom." I feel so blessed.

I have been able to save \$1080.00 in my savings account and continue to put money away that I plan to use for a deposit when I am able to find housing. I am looking forward to having my own place and to be able to provide a safe place for myself and my children to be able to come visit me.

My friends and family have noticed a big change in myself. I stand a little taller, more outgoing, smile more often and laugh a little louder. I'm not down on myself and I'm learning to put my needs first. I have had many little surgeries to improve my vision and no longer wear glasses. I have had a few surgeries to remove tumors on my body that I felt caused others to look at me strange. I'm learning that I am important and I need to take care of my own personal needs and health in order to allow me to be there for my sons.

I'm happy to say that I am 100% more confident than I had been before being part of Supported Employment and I want to thank everyone who has helped me and who helps others by doing this work. It made a big difference in myself and my life and I'm sure it does for others. I want to give a BIG thanks to SE Michelle and the counselors I worked with at Mid-Columbia Center for Living.