Success Stories

A high school drop out at the age of sixteen, James Thomas, Averill Park, spent the next fifteen years battling addiction, violence and legal problems. He was homeless and wandering the streets of Albany when he finally made a commitment to himself to get and stay sober. While in recovery, Thomas heard about the Capital District Educational Opportunity Center and enrolled in the College Preparation Program. Upon his graduation from the Center in 1991, Thomas went on to earn an associates degree in physical science from Russell Sage Junior College of Albany in 1994 with a GPA of 3.76; a bachelors of science in biology and psychology from the University at Albany in 1996 with a GPA of 3.65; and a masters in public health from the University at Albany. He initially was employed as the Outreach Coordinator for Equinox. After completing his Master's degree, he took a position at the Educational Opportunity Program at University at Albany, where he presently holds the position of Senior Academic Advisor.

Dale Walsh, East Berne, was a newly divorced mother of two young children surviving on $95 a week when she decided that she needed to advance her career. She entered the Capital District Educational Opportunity Center's evening Clerk Typist Program while working full-time days in the food service industry. After her graduation in 1977, Walsh obtained employment in the business field and, in 1978, made a career move to take a position as a clerk typist/receptionist at St. Peter's Hospital. Within eighteen months, she was promoted to a Human Resources Personnel Interviewer and later to a Human Resources Generalist. While working full-time days, she went to college at night, graduating with an associates degree in business from Maria College with a 4.0 average in 1995 and then completing a bachelor's in Business Administration from the College of St. Rose in 2003. In 2004, she obtained her present position as Recruiter. “I wouldn't be where I am today without the EOC,” says Walsh.

Willie Mae Chapple, Troy, enrolled in the Capital District Educational Opportunity Center’s Culinary Training Programs as a single mother with no public assistance. While attending the EOC, she worked part-time to support her daughter. Upon graduating in 1999, Chapple was employed by Quality Food Management as a manager trainee. Within three months, she was promoted to food service director of Chartwells Dining at Indian Quad at the University at Albany. Her responsibilities include purchasing of all food and beverages, maintaining proper cost control, overseeing sanitation, preparing the menu for 500 daily lunches, and supervising eight employees. Chapple married William Michaels, a 1998 EOC Culinary graduate. Chapple visits the Center often, inspiring current Culinary students by showing them just how far they can take their EOC training.

Helena (Srokowska) Marsh, Ballston Spa, had tried her hand at many career paths when a friend told her about the Cosmetology Program at the EOC. Upon her graduation in 1972, Marsh moved up the career ladder, first working in a small salon, then a larger, full service center, and then opening her own salon. While working in the beauty field, she took classes and obtained vocational teaching certification through SUNY at Oswego. She taught at various vocational programs until obtaining permanent certification and tenure at what is now known as the Abrookin Vocational Technical School in the Albany City School District. Throughout her twenty years of teaching, she kept in close touch with all of her EOC instructors and has brought her own students into the EOC to allow them to see the advanced methods used in the EOC classroom. Marsh retired from teaching in June 2006 but continues to run her own business, Desiree’s, in Ballston Spa. “The EOC gave me the training to do what I love,” said Marsh.