Within Our REACH

“I will never forget where I came from”

“Thank you for making a positive impact in my life...”

A Bittersweet Farewell Story by Shena Penner

I first started REACH as a college student back in May of 2011. Little did I know what BIG IMPACT this program would have on my life. As my college semesters passed and graduation was approaching, I flipped my major multiple times, whether it was the graphic design or accounting field. Being a single parent, I wanted to provide my son with a better life than what I had growing up. It was then obvious which field I needed to get into....

At first, I didn’t like the idea of getting assistance from the State. I didn’t want people to think I wouldn’t do anything with my life and never “become someone.” However, at the same time, I also really did not care what other people thought about me because I was dead set on proving wrong people who thought this way of me.

Accounting became my major while I completed my degree here at OSU-OKC. It was definitely not the easiest road. Being a single parent, the only family support I got at home was from my grandparents. I didn’t have anyone else to help out. REACH has been a stronghold in my life since the day I started the program. Even though I am no longer in the program, I still feel like there is a connection. Without the amazing people at REACH who have became a part of my “backbone,” I wouldn’t be where I am at now today.

As I finish my last tasks in the REACH4Work office, it is very hard not to shed tears. REACH has put such a positive impact in my life that I will “never forget where I came from.” Later this month, I will be transitioning into a new role (in the accounting field) with a different company, and I will no longer be Secretary of REACH4Work.

For you who may be reading this today and deciding whether this is the program for you, do what you feel is best for your family, and make a better life for your children than what you may/may not have had. If this is the program, you will have the most excellent support team that I have ever come to cross. I have felt very fortunate to have such a great support system other than my family. I feel very blessed to have worked as part of the REACH / REACH4Work team for almost seven months now.

Thank you REACH/REACH4Work for making such a positive impact in my life.

“Some folks succeed because they’re destined to, but most succeed because they’re determined to”

-Roy Reiman
REACH Training Accomplishments

Holiday Workshop Sharpens Networking and Speaking Skills

REACH and REACH4Work students and staff met at Ci-Ci’s Pizza on Monday, December 23, 2013 to discuss the benefits of internships and how they can open doors for students to network with potential employers. Internships provide key opportunities for students to shine, as they demonstrate their knowledge, skills, abilities, and work ethic for potential employers.

The students practiced impromptu speaking skills at the Holiday workshop. Each student had three minutes to speak on a topic drawn from a hat. The topics had been submitted by the students themselves! Staff emphasized how to apply the impromptu speaking techniques when on interviews or during networking opportunities. In addition, each student and staff shared their favorite Christmas memory and what the holiday season means to them. (See photo above left.)

***College Students***

Former REACH Students on Vice-President’s Honor Roll

Two former REACH college students received recognition for their outstanding performance in the classroom for the Fall 2013 Semester at OSU-OKC! Deshon Roby and Shylla Mayes were both included in OSU-OKC’s Fall 2013 Vice-President’s Honor Roll for accomplishing a 3.0 GPA or greater while taking a full-time college course load!

http://www.osuokc.edu/honorroll/vp.aspx
REACH Graduate and Employment Accomplishments!

Resourceful, resilient and ready are adjectives that aptly describe our recent graduates. Katrina Hunter (September 2013) and Twyla Gaines (November 2013) are true examples of where hard work, dedication and persistence will take you. Both students encountered and overcame challenges that could have derailed their success, but they were determined to REACH their goals. REACH partners with the business community to offer 30-day internship opportunities for students while they attend the program. Ms. Hunter completed her internship with Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma City. Ms. Gaines was an intern with Alpha Home Health. We were able to visit with them in February to see how things are going now that they have full-time employment as well as advice they would offer to current students.

Twyla Gaines

I began working at Phycon billing and coding company on November 12, 2013. This is not just a job to me it’s an opportunity for me to build a career in this field. I love working in billing and coding as I am constantly learning new things and get to be a part of a team that works together to get the job done.

REACH prepared me for the position by providing extensive training in coding and billing as well as in 10-key and keyboarding. In order to be employed with Phycon a candidate has to pass an employment test. The skills that I gained while in REACH did just that. I was able to 10-key 8,000 kph and type 45 wpm passing my exams with flying colors!

My advice for new students is to strive for perfect attendance. This will help you in adjusting to being in the workforce, especially if the company has a policy regarding absences within the first 90 days of employment.

Katrina Hunter

I began working at Phycon in January 2014. I really enjoy my job and the different perks it offers. My daily routine consists of medical data entry, so accuracy and attention to detail are very important. We can dress business casual, but best of all our workday ends at Noon Fridays. This incentive is granted to employees who work nine hour days Monday – Thursday.

REACH provided me the opportunity to gain skills in Microsoft Office and other computer programs that I use daily in my current role. My advice to students is to be serious about interview prepping. Employers will ask tough questions and may want to conduct two interviews with you to ensure you are a good fit for the position. Also, it’s a good idea to contact your references to advise them that they will be receiving calls for reference checks.
Two REACH students, Angela Bullard and Latisha Scott, recently joined the ranks of the working in September 2013! After completing her Administrative Assistant training, Angela Bullard turned an internship opportunity at Legal Aid Services OKC into a career move by joining AmeriCorps and becoming employed at that very location.

Not to be outdone, Latisha Scott completed her Medical Office Assistant training in late August and quickly put those skills to use securing a Customer Service Representative position with the Xerox Plant in Yukon, Oklahoma. Both students set an exemplary precedent for achievement during their time in the REACH classroom.

REACH&REACH4Work staff wish both the best of luck in their new careers.

REACH4Work Student Spotlight

Charlene Gilbreath came to our program with a major lack of confidence and depression due to some serious family/personal issues. It was truly amazing to watch her transform, coming to class dressed properly and getting some good job leads early on.

When she left our program employed, she looked like a different person. With her change in attitude, came growth in her confidence and self image. Her eyes were clear. She could look you in the eye and genuinely smile back at you! Charlene blossomed into a very professional person, and that led her to employment.

Congratulations, Charlene! REACH4Work wishes you the best in your future!
The REACH4Work Job Search program lasts four weeks. REACH4Work students participate in classroom job readiness training activities Monday through Wednesday of the first week. Attendance is of extreme importance the first three days in program for successful outcomes. On Thursdays students become eligible to participate in the outside job search activities, and they continue to search each day thereafter until gainful employment. We are proud of our student employment success and accomplishments!
Celebrity Suiting!

On February 18-20, 2014, Suited for Success hosted its annual Celebrity Suiting event where they invite local celebrities, professional and civic leaders to be volunteers and work with their clients.

This year, KFOR reporter Lacey Lett; Black Chamber of Commerce President, Sharron Jackson; Jake Radio personality, Carly Rae; City Councilwoman, Willa Johnson; and KRMP radio personality, Launa West responded to the call for service!

*Kudos to each for their willingness to serve!*

Onsite Clothes Closet

Appearance and personal grooming communicate a message to others in the workplace. The ability to dress appropriately for work helps people feel better about themselves and boosts confidence. When people feel better about themselves, their relationships and attitudes are enhanced.

Students in the REACH and REACH4Work programs are provided the opportunity to visit an onsite clothing closet and to go to a business partner (e.g., Suited for Success) in order to build an appropriate work wardrobe.

To make donations, contact Martha Holland, the REACH4Work Job Coach, who coordinates the attire resources. She can be reached at 405-945-9133.
American Holidays and Observances

There's so much to celebrate! You will probably be familiar with most of these popular special days. Please note: There are no spaces between words and no apostrophes in the puzzle.

ACROSS
2. This animal stars on February 2.
3. The second Monday in October honors this explorer.
5. These women are honored on the second Sunday in May.
6. December 25
7. They're honored on the third Sunday in June.
13. First Tuesday after the first Monday in November (2 words)
14. January 1 (3 words)
15. October 31
17. Third Monday in February is ____ Day.
18. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is in this month.

DOWN
1. July 4th is also known as ____ Day.
4. The last Monday in May is ____ Day.
3. Fourth Thursday in November
9. This environmentally-friendly day is April 15. (2 words)
11. The first Monday in September (2 words)
12. Valentine's Day is ____ 14th.
16. A Christian holiday celebrate on a Sunday in March or April

Answers on Page 10

EclipseCrossword.com
REACH and REACH4Work are designed to enhance employment and training opportunities for unemployed adults.

REACH provides educational and short-term career skills training in various areas that qualify students to enter the workforce in professional positions. REACH orientations are held Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m.

REACH4Work students are empowered to gain employment and exhibit life skills necessary to compete in the labor market. REACH4Work holds orientation each Monday at 8:30 a.m.

Program participants are accepted through a referral-based system only. Contact program staff for more information.