

Student Success Story - Diana Snelling

September 2016

"My name is Diana Snelling and I am 26 years old.

I am an Adult Education success story.

The day I earned my diploma was the best day of my life because once upon a time, I was just another statistic. I was another black sheep who strayed from the flock and was labeled as a failure. I was an outsider looking in who wanted the things that others had, but I felt too damaged to get them.

I felt like I did not deserve them.

I struggled with these thoughts at a young age because of my upbringing. The people that I trusted the most to help lift me up, support me, and protect me were the same people who hurt me. I was sexually abused, and I always felt different than the other kids because of it. I tried different things to fit in, but nothing seemed to work; so, I tried to numb the feelings of inadequacy with drugs and alcohol. That only made things worse.

I dropped out of school.

During this time of struggle, my mother was diagnosed with cancer and had become very sick. The doctors gave her four months to live and when hospice came, reality set in. As she laid in the bed she would die in, she looked me in the eyes and made me promise to get my diploma.

I promised, but I was full of empty promises.

Eventually, I just stopped following the rules. They put a number on my head, said I was a hopeless cause, and sent me to jail. I signed up to be baptized so I could get out of my cell, but I didn't know that this would change my life forever. I was washed of all my pain.



I had a clean slate. I felt different. I felt new. After starting my life over by accepting God into my heart, I got out of the way.

After taking some classes in jail, I tried to pass the test but just barely failed. That did not keep me down. I knew that if God wanted me to have it then – I would have it. I needed to learn a little more and that was ok, because I realized that anything I wanted in this world would not just be handed to me.

I had to work hard for it.

When I got out of jail I did not give up. I really wanted my high school diploma, so I signed up for more classes as soon as I moved to Nashville. I went to class and I studied. I studied at home. I studied at school. I studied a lot. Even with all my hard work, there were a few more things that pulled me away; heartbreaks, financial problems, and transportation issues, but I did not make excuses. Grant and Drake, along with my family and loved ones, cheered me on along the way.

It felt great to have people believing in me! I was unstoppable and felt like anything was possible. And it was. I took the HiSET and passed everything except Math, but after countless hours of additional studying – I passed!

The day I passed the test was my mother's birthday.

I now work for the same Adult Education Program that helped me earn my diploma, and I am enrolled in college so that I can become a Social Worker so I can help victims of child abuse.

I've learned that if you have just a mustard seed of faith and a little elbow grease, your dreams can come true. I am good enough and smart enough – and so are you.

I believe in you."