

KEEP Success

S T O R I E S

everyday people and their remarkable achievements

Jessica Darland Lucas: Prepared for a Secure Future

In 2003, Jessica Darland Lucas was a recently divorced, 21-year-old single mother training for a nursing career to support herself and her young son. Although she was excelling academically, the financial strain of her daily college-related expenses for transportation, meals, and childcare threatened to derail her training.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Program provided Jessica with a crucial assist that helped her achieve her career goals. Today, Jessica is a nursing staff member in the new Chest Pain Unit at King's Daughters Medical Center in Ashland. The unit is a state-of-the-art cardiovascular facility that provides patient care in an atmosphere more like a luxury hotel than a traditional hospital wing.

When she enrolled in WIA, Jessica was a "struggling college student" who had the required determination but lacked the money to pay the high costs associated with her program of study at Ashland Community and Technical College. The WIA program "lifted a huge burden from her shoulders" by covering those costs for her, Jessica says.

In addition to assisting teens and young adults with college- or training-related expenses, the WIA Youth Program also places participants in public and private sector jobs with local employers that match the their interests and allow them to earn a paycheck as they learn valuable career skills. The program also provides a broad array of year-round services including: tutoring, study skills, alternative schooling, leadership development, mentoring, guidance and counseling.

The Northeast Kentucky Community Action Agency delivers WIA programs in Carter, Elliott, and Lawrence counties under contract with the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP). The Northeast Kentucky Community Action Agency in Olive Hill is also an access point for the JobSight network, a collaborative partnership of workforce and training agencies administered by EKCEP.

Brenda Shumate, Jessica's WIA career adviser, says Jessica gratefully accepted the assistance the program provided her.

"Our being able to help Jessica with childcare and her other expenses took part of the load off of her so she



Jessica Darland Lucas

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didn't have to keep two or three part-time jobs to keep things going," Brenda says. "She was able remain focused on her schoolwork and her child."

WIA continued to assist Jessica as she finished the college's two-year nursing program with clinical training at Our Lady of Bellefonte Hospital in Ashland and Three Rivers Medical Center in Louisa.

Jessica soon began working part-time at King's Daughters Medical Center in Ashland. She was hired there as a full-time registered nurse in May 2005 after completing her associate's degree in nursing.

WIA also helped Jessica cover of the costs of preparing for and taking the licensing exam. Brenda says that support was one of the most beneficial aspects of the program for Jessica. Jessica agrees.

To share your WIA success stories in future issues of EKCEP Success Stories, contact Michael Cornett at EKCEP, 606-436-5751 or e-mail him at mcornett@ekcep.org

“Many students in my class couldn’t afford to get that kind of help to prepare, and they didn’t pass their exams,” Jessica says.

Jessica says she is glad to have a career in a profession where the demand for employees will always be high.

“I like that sense of security, and I’m glad the WIA helped me stay on track,” Jessica says. “I can now provide for my family without any outside assistance, and I’m looking forward to providing my children more opportunities as they grow up than I had when I was a child.

“I’ll always be grateful to the WIA for helping me get where I am. 🌐

Successful
T H O U G H T S

“I have learned that there is no failure in competing, or in life, as long as you keep moving. It’s about refusing to be stopped.”
– Amby Burfoot

For more than 35 years, EKCEP—the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc.—has served 23 mountain counties in eastern Kentucky with workforce development, training, and employment programs to meet the region’s changing needs.

EKCEP operates the JobSight network of workforce centers, where more than a dozen state and federal employment and training programs are gathered under one roof to meet the needs of eastern Kentucky’s job seekers and employers.

EKCEP also administers programs that deliver tiered levels of services—including assistance with tuition and books—to adults, dislocated workers, and economically disadvantaged young people under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Delivered through the JobSight network, these WIA programs use a wide variety of resources to help customers advance their careers.

For more information on what EKCEP’S WIA programs can do for you, visit www.ekcep.org, contact your local JobSight location, or e-mail EKCEP’s central office at ekcep@ekcep.org.

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