

Tammy Perkins



Tammy grew up in Hempstead, Long Island. She is the middle child of three girls and was raised in single-parent home. Her mother struggled to make ends meet and always had to work two or three jobs. Her mother would rush home between jobs to feed the family, then rush back out to work again. She didn't want her children to feel deprived and always made sure the children were comfortable. She tried very hard not to let her issues affect her daughters.

Tammy had children at a young age; she was only 17 years old, and a senior in high school, when her first child was born. She was forced to leave school and work part-time. Her boyfriend helped in any way he could. When she was 18 years old, Tammy left her mother's home to start a life with her boyfriend because she was pregnant again. They married and lived in Brooklyn. Their life was not without struggles and working two or three minimum-wage jobs. To avoid the expense of day care, he worked nights and she worked days. "The hardest thing I ever had to do was raise children at such a young age and keep them focused and grounded."

By the time Tammy turned 20 years old, they moved to Schenectady. They had family there and Tammy's husband could get a job with their cousin. Tammy decided to stay at home to care for the children; however, they struggled financially and it seemed they were falling behind instead of getting ahead. Like her Mother, Tammy didn't want their struggles to affect her children. During this time, Tammy worked toward getting her GED but also became pregnant for their third child.

Soon after, Tammy returned to the workforce and took a clerical job as a human resources assistant. But, after seven years, she was laid off.

She saw a promotional ad about SCAP and our employment services we offer. She felt this was a good time to start over in a new career path, so she enrolled in the program. "I felt out of place, I was the oldest person in the group. But, for me it worked out for the best. I was able to learn from the younger people and I felt like they learned from me too. Because of my human resources background, during the classes I could point things out like first impressions and that's what people remember."

Once Tammy completed the career readiness program, she advanced to the educational and clinical training portion at SCCC where she earned her healthcare certifications. One of the nursing homes where she did her clinical rotations hired her on the spot as a Certified Nurse Assistant. While Tammy was at SCAP, her mother was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Tammy said her new training helped her to facilitate her mom's needs and motivated her to work in the health care field.

Tammy said, "To make someone's day better is more fulfilling than anything. One resident only wanted me to care for her. I have a, *I'm here to help*, attitude. I was exhausted, but happy going home because I made a difference in someone's life."

This is not the end of Tammy's story; however. Her experience as a CNA, plus her previous job experience as a clerk in a human resources office, provided Tammy with the opportunity to apply for a Human Resources Coordinator position. Tammy was hired for the job. In her own words, Tammy said, "I am grateful to SCAP that my career goals are finally fulfilled. When you're doing something you love, it's not work." Tammy stops by SCAP occasionally, when she can, and helps out in our Career Readiness classrooms. She speaks to the classes about what her organization looks for when hiring. Tammy said that maybe someday she will return to school for her LPN or even an RN. She likes the hands-on experience of nursing.

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