

Rachel Diaz



Rachel Diaz is the mother of four young children, ranging in age from 8 months to 15 years. Rachael knew her children were learning about life by watching her. However, she felt like she was saying one thing, but doing another. Rachel was especially concerned about her eldest daughter. As Rachael puts it, “I want her to have a mother she could look up to, one that can set a good example and be a positive role model.”

That is why Rachael applied for SCAP’s Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG) program. She heard about the program through a friend and decided to pursue training for her Home Health Aide (HHA) certification. “At first, I thought I didn’t need the Career Readiness part, because I’ve been working all my life.”

However, she found that the course changed her in unexpected ways. “It felt so good to set a foundation for me and my children. With SCAP’s help, I learned to see myself and my circumstances from a different perspective. Now I’m less judgmental and more accepting of other people’s points of view.”

Describing herself as strong-willed and motivated, Rachael used those strengths to keep her going during both the Career Readiness class and her subsequent HHA training at Schenectady County Community College (SCCC).

Rachel faced several difficult challenges during her training. Her son has severe asthma and needs monitoring and care throughout the day. Fortunately, Rachael’s husband and mother were there to support her and provide the necessary care while she attended class.

Additionally, while attending Career Readiness class, Rachael and her family were forced to move out of their apartment due to a bed bug infestation from a neighboring dwelling. The family had to start over by replacing most of their furniture and clothing, while also re-establishing themselves in a new apartment. All the while, Rachael didn’t miss a day of class.

Then, tragically, Rachel’s sister died from breast cancer at the age of 30, just days before Rachael was scheduled to begin HHA training at SCCC. Rachael said, “It was a challenge keeping a clear head and staying positive while dealing with the death of my sister.” However, she said she kept her eyes on the prize – her HHA certification – which she proudly received on June 12, 2013.

Rachael immediately returned to SCAP to update her resume so she could begin her job hunt in earnest. When asked what advice she would give to others in a similar situation, Rachael was quick to reply, “It’s never too late to start something new, even at thirty-three years old.”

Rachael isn’t finished yet. Even though she expects to be working very soon, she is not through with learning. Her next pursuit will be to study for and obtain her GED. Although Rachael never finished high school, she wants her children to know that education is the key to being successful. And she doesn’t want her children to have to wait for that success in their lives.

As of this writing, Rachel received a job offer with a local health care facility and is anxious to begin her health care career!