Portraits of Student Success

Statewide and Region IV Winner of a scholarship award funded by the CalWORKs Association

Robin Riviera

California Community Colleges CalWORKs Association
A Voice for Education
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Compiled and edited by Mt. San Jacinto Community College CalWORKs staff for the CalWORKs Association. If you have any questions or comments regarding this publication, contact the CalWORKs Association at their website calworksassociation.org.
Introduction

In this 2012 release of the California Community Colleges CalWORKs Association Portraits of Student Success 2012, the Association highlights 41 successful CalWORKs students chosen by the CalWORKs Association Board to recognize their accomplishments and to provide key stakeholders and decision-makers in the social welfare policy arena examples of the value and impact of the California Community College CalWORKs program on the success of these students. In December 2004, the System Office highlighted 93 student to recognize their success; in 2008 the CalWORKs Association highlighted 70 students; and in 2011 the CalWORKs Association highlighted 16 students.

For the California Community Colleges CalWORKs Association Portraits of Student Success, 2012, the community college CalWORKs program staff submitted over 70 student names. These portraits represent CalWORKs students from 33 of our colleges and exemplify the many successes achieved by the community college CalWORKs students throughout California.

Background

The California Community College CalWORKs program provides funds to colleges to assist welfare recipient students and those who are in transition from welfare to achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency. To assist these students in improving their marketability, the community college offer specific services that support them in obtaining the necessary education and skills to begin and enhance their career growth.

Through the CalWORKs program, California Community Colleges provide support services, including child care, academic and personal counseling, work study and job placement, that are focused on helping Temporary Assistance for needly Families (TANF) recipients complete their degree or certificate programs.

Studies continue to demonstrate that postsecondary education, coupled with comprehensive support services, is an important aspect of welfare reform. For instance, an analysis completed by the Center for Law and Social Policy found that the second year after leaving school, the median annual earnings of former community college CalWORKs student who completed their associate’s degree were five times greater than prior to beginning their college education. Those who completed certificate programs had tripled their earnings. (Jobs to Careers: How California Community College Credentials Pay Off for Welfare Participants. Center for Law and Social Policy, May 2004).

These data only begin to demonstrate the value of participation in the community college CalWORKs program in improving the long-term outcomes of families who have been on welfare. This publication is designed to provide state policymakers with a sense of how critical the CalWORKs program is to the success of the students it serves.
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The student in California Community Colleges CalWORKs Portrait of Success Students 2012 reflect the diversity of the CalWORKs students the California Community Colleges serve. Most of the students submitted for recognition are described in the California Community Colleges CalWORKs Portraits of Student Success, 2012. The CalWORKs Association highlights forty-one students in-depth. These forty-one students represent a variety of ethnicities, age groups, and are from various geographic locations throughout California. These student’s backgrounds and reasons for obtaining welfare assistance are diverse. Regardless of their backgrounds, all students featured share the common goal of completing their education so that they can find a career that will enable them to be financially self-sufficient to support their families without welfare assistance. Their stories are of perseverance, hope, and second chances.

All of the students featured in the CalWORKs Association’s Portraits of Student Success, 2012 are examples of how significant the impact can be when the California Community Colleges help families successfully transition from welfare to work. It is with great pleasure that the CalWORKs Association congratulates these students, as well as all the CalWORKs students who remain enrolled in our community college programs throughout California and continue to persevere despite the many challenges they face. The Association also commends the many CalWORKs program coordinators, counselors, and other staff at the California Community Colleges whose commitment helps our students successfully reach their dream of obtaining a college education.
Monica Careyette, Region 6 Winner
Allan Hancock College, Allan Hancock Joint CC District

Area of Study: Human Services
Expected Degree Completion: 2013

In recommending Monica Careyette for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Carissa Peral writes, Monica “has overcome many barriers, including addiction to achieve her goal of obtaining a certificate in Human Services, and is continuing her education to obtain an Associate’s degree. She is a positive role model and a great advocate for our students.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:
“The first challenge that I have overcome was rebuilding my life after an addiction to methamphetamines. It took a lot of work to even feel like a good person again. When I first started school I did not feel worthy of an education and I lacked self-confidence. I had lived in chaos for so long that I had to make my life normal again. I am a single parent; my daughter was 6 months old when I started at Hancock College. It was very hard juggling homework and everything that comes along with being a student. On top of that I had to overcome the feelings of guilt that I had for not being with my daughter all of the time. However, I knew that my sacrifice of time away from her to attend school would be worth it in the end.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending college has given me my life back. Before I started, I felt ‘broken’. Even though I had my beautiful, healthy daughter and I was clean there was something missing in my life. I had no hope and it was so hard to get over all of the damage I had done due to my addiction, I did not feel worthy of an education. After the first semester at Allan Hancock College I realized that I thoroughly enjoyed learning and being in the college environment was exactly where I needed and wanted to be. It helped me gain back my self confidence and I was able to make some really good friends.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The CalWORKs program has been instrumental [part of] achieving my goals. When I first started I was lost, the [people in the] program held my hand , and showed me everything that I need to know. Also, knowing that I have a place on campus where I feel comfortable, and [that is] designed specifically with CalWORKs students in mind is so important to me. The CalWORKs staff and counselors understand how hard it is being on public assistance, being a single parent, and juggling work and school From the school supplies to the free printing in the CalWORKs computer lab, and the emergency gas cards, the program helps in so many ways. It is also very helpful that if I have any questions about my benefits from the County that they can answer questions and advocate for me. I know that I would not have achieved my goals if it were not for the CalWORKs program.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My first goal is to obtain my Associates degree in Human Services. After that, I am hoping to get a job within the field of Human Services, helping others. I would also love to work in an educational setting, assist other students with similar [backgrounds] as mine. I want to help them achieve their goals, and better their lives [with] education[al] assistance. I also help to continue my education and obtain a Bachelor’s degree I Social Science. I truly believe that education is the key to end the cycle of poverty and welfare. It would mean the world to me to give back to others the gift of an education, leading to a better life.”
In recommending Vivien Y. Thao for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Dr. Jo Anna Birdsall and Shirley Dollard writes, “Completed Education and Gainfully Employed”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“I have overcome multiple challenges while pursuing my A.S. in Respiratory Care. When I started classes at Butte College, I was a mother of two children, ages four and two. In addition to attending classes full-time and caring for my family, I also worked part-time at Butte College as a Student Assistant. During the last year of my education, I gave birth to my third child.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending Butte College has made a huge impact on my life. Butte College provided me with the education and training to prepare me for a professional career as a Respiratory Care Practitioner. Butte College has also provided me with the opportunity to study alongside a diverse group of students. This helped to prepare me to work with diverse cultures in the health field. Butte College was a great experience for me.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The Butte College CalWORKs Program had the most impact on my education during my two years of enrollment in the Respiratory Care Program. They worked with the Butte College Department of Employment and Social Services to coordinate childcare for my children, and assisted me with educational and transportation expenses while my husband and I both attended school. The CalWORKs Program also worked with me to find placement for Butte College CalWORKs work-study. I am very thankful for my experiences, both with the Butte College department of Employment and Social Services and the Butte College CalWORKs Program.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My plans for the next five years is to continue working at Oroville Hospital as a Respiratory Care Practitioner while pursuing my Bachelors of Science Degree as a Respiratory Care Practitioner.”
In recommending Carmen Hilldale for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Catherine Lachance writes, “Carmen has worked diligently for her Skills Certificate in Drug and Alcohol Studies, A.S. Degree in Human Services, and A.A. Degree in Communications Studies. She is an exemplary student at Cabrillo College, and maintains a 4.0 GPA with a cumulative GPA of 3.91. I am elated to share that Carmen will receive her Drug and Alcohol certificate, A.A. and A.S. in Spring 2012, and has accepted a job doing the work she has so thoughtfully pursued.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:
“As a child I was exposed to extreme alcoholism, domestic violence, and our family was very poor. My father was disabled, and my mother lived on a poverty-stricken Native American reservation before meeting my father. As a result to their life experiences, neither one of them had any secondary educations. As a result of my life experiences, I developed very low self-esteem and anxiety. Instead of going to college after high school, I took a break; it was hard to get motivated to re-enter school. After enrolling in college, I became pregnant and I ended up a single parent. I managed it by taking most of my classes online and through educational planning, provided by Fast Track To Work and the CalWORKs Programs.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Going back to school has really changed my life. My mother is very proud that I am a first generation college graduate. Above all I am successful in school, which has raised my self-esteem. I feel that college has made me into a better parent as well, and now I will be able to get a career to support my daughter.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“I was very fortunate to be encouraged by staff to pursue a work study job on the college campus. I ended up getting a job in the Human Services Department working as a student assistant for the instructors. I got the opportunity to be a student representative at a Human Services Department meeting. I got to work at multiple job sites on the college campus, and as a result have gained valuable job skills and work experience, which was one of my main goals.”

Goals for the next five years:
“In the next five years I would like to become certified through the State of California as an Addiction Specialist, hope to have a bachelor’s degree, and to have started working towards an even higher degree. My ultimate dream is to get a master’s degree and be working in a professional career that helps people and maybe even one day becoming a community college
In recommending Cindy Kaskey for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Catherine Lachance writes, “Cindy has worked diligently for her Skills Certificate in Digital Imaging, awarded in June 2011. She continues to work towards her Associate’s Degree in Web Design which should be awarded June 2012. Cindy is an exemplary student at Cabrillo College, she maintained a 4.0 GPA for 3 of 5 semesters with a cumulative GPA of 3.72. Her career goal is to return to the art therapy world, exploring creative expression with at risk children and adults; in addition to creating websites, contracting out, and providing tutoring.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:
“I am raising children on my own after leaving Australia where I was working as an art therapist and art teacher for 25 years. My husband and I separated, and I needed to return to the U.S. In Australia I was making a significant amount of money. My children still living at home are 12 and 19, it became apparent the income as an art therapist and art teacher in California was not going to sustain us. I needed to do something that earned us more money, and was flexible so I could be available for my children.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending Cabrillo was a great choice, I fit it easily into my schedule and it is close to home. I learned a lot in all classes. It made my job more secure as I learned ways to make businesses more profitable.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“...I was able to work with a programmer to create a gaming app called Frogtastic. Apple picked up the app and added it to their store. That gave our family some additional money, and it gets my name into the gaming community. I was excited because all of the work we did on this app was done strictly by e-mail. Because of my training and background I knew exactly what he wanted without having to meet in person. In the time I have been going to school and working on web design, my employer has tripled their presence on the web selling specialized jewelry.”

Goals for the next five years:
“In the next 5 years I would love to study computer animation, so that I could work more creatively. I like collaborating with programmers creating apps and games, and I love using art so people can explore their creative expression. My dream is to continue foundation work, supporting people with disabilities and people who are in need.”
Amanda Larke  
Las Positas College,  
Chabot-Las Positas CC District  

Area of Study: Psychology  

Expected Degree Completion: May, 2014

In recommending Amanda Larke for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Michelle Zapata writes, “Amanda has been a dedicated student... In January, Amanda reached her goal and began her first quarter at CSUEB as a Psychology Major. She expects to earn her B.S. degree in the Spring of 2014. She is hopeful for the future and works hard, because she is determined to provide a nurturing environment for her daughter. I believe she is a “Portrait of Success” because she continues to work towards her goal, despite everyday challenge”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
The first challenge I had to overcome was coming to terms that my daughter had a serious of seizures in the first year and a half of her life, and developed special needs because of them. Secondly, I had to rebuild my self-worth, after being torn down in an abusive relationship with my daughter’s father. I had to learn how to deal with my daughter’s medical conditions, making sure school didn’t take time away from her. I also had to learn how to believe and fight for myself, to know that I could and would educate myself, to be able to provide for my daughter, and give her the life I want for her.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:  
“Attending community college made a difference in my life because it helped me to regain my confidence, the tools I needed I needed to succeed, work ethic, and the mindset to move forward. It has also helped me to become more independent, and taught me to stay persistent to achieve my goals. I believe the smaller class size and campus helped to not overwhelm me when I was working on my self-esteem. Being at a university now, I often get twinges of anxiety here and there, but if I hadn’t gone to community college first I probably wouldn’t be able to handle where I am now.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:  
“Whenever I was confused or needed help, I would go to Michelle Zapata and Melissa Tallerico, and they would assist me. I may have been persistent, but when I would let up they would be there to tell me to keep trying and not to give up. It was Michelle who rechecked my transcripts and told me I did indeed have enough units to transfer. I spoke to a CSUEB admissions advisor, and petitioned to be accepted to the winter quarter even after being told no.”

Goals for the next five years:  
“My plans for the next five years are to graduate with my B.S. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology by Spring quarter of 2014. I Hope to find a position in Human Resources or possibly in Career Counseling and hopefully be as helpful to a struggling single mother as Michelle has been to me.”
Mackenzie Pruden
Las Positas College,
Chabot-Las Positas C.C. District

Area of Study: Surgical Technology

Expected Degree Completion: December & 2011

In recommending Mackenzie Pruden for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Michelle Zapata writes, “Mackenzie is hard-working and dedicated to her family, education, and career. Her high level of commitment has brought her success both academically and professionally. She earned Highest Honors from Las Positas College with a 3.98 GPA. Upon earning her Associate in Science degree from the Surgical Technology program, she received an offer of permanent employment. I believe she has a bright future ahead of her, and is an inspiring role model for her daughter.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“When I started working on my degree, I was in an abusive relationship…[which] made it difficult to progress in school. After some time, I finally found the courage to leave. Once I was in a more stable environment, I was able to balance being in school full-time, working, and raising my daughter. However, every semester continued to be a challenge, because it meant completely reorganizing, and rescheduling my life to make everything work to ensure that I was in compliance with the CalWORKs Program.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“I attended three different community colleges in order to complete this degree. Each school had something different to offer…I quickly learned my way around campus offices that could assist me in accomplishing my goals, and have met so many wonderful people that have helped me along the way.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The CalWORKs program helped me obtain my goals by providing me with the financial assistance to take classes, commute to school, and feed and clothe my child. All of the workers were helpful and respectful to me. Having priority registration definitely helped me get into classes that were difficult to get into. CalWORKs representatives on campus were there every semester making sure that everything was in order to get full benefits of the program. I appreciated that there were people that I could share good news with, and they would encourage me to continue doing the best I could when things got hard.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My plan for the next five years is to continue working at my new job! I was fortunate enough to do so well during my Surgical Technologist internship that they decided to hire me. I now have a full time job with benefits; earning enough money to support my daughter comfortably for the foreseeable future. I plan to stay with this hospital as long as I can. I am still considering pursuing a Physician’s Assistant degree in the future, but for now I want to gain experience as a Surgical Technologist. Since I have been so busy for the first three and a half years of my daughter’s life, I am looking forward to spending quality time with her!”
In recommending Robin Riviera for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Michelle Zapata writes, “Robin Rivera is a role model and inspiration to her peers. She excels academically—with a GPA of 3.85—and is the secretary of Alpha Gamma Sigma and treasurer for Psi Beta Psychology Club. Robin was recently nominated for the highly competitive Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, and the All-USA/Coca-Cola Community College Academic Team [and] awarded the Soroptimist Women’s Opportunity Award, which honored her efforts to turn her life around and work towards a career. Robin also worked as a Student Assistant in the CalWORKs and EOPS Office. Robin made significant contributions to our office and is always a friendly face willing to assist her peers. Robin also makes positive contributions to her community. She volunteers with MISSEY, a non-profit advocating for sexually exploited youth in the bay area, and she has testified on behalf of the CalWORKs Program to our state’s policymakers, ensuring the longevity of the program. Robin is about to transfer to [UC Berkley] where she will earn her Bachelor’s degree in Psychology. Robin’s ability to balance school and work—all while raising her daughter—proves that she is a “Portrait of Success.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced: “My first challenge I had to overcome in pursuing my degree was my own self-doubt and emotional health. I have worked very hard through therapy, yoga/meditation, and support groups to heal from past trauma, addiction, and lack of confidence. Each accomplishment has greatly impacted my healing process and the way I view myself as a woman in today’s society. The second challenge has been financially. I just barely have enough for rent and gas now, but I make it happen. I know all my hard work is paying off.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life: “Attending community college has shown me what I have to offer and a glimpse of just how much I can handle. I didn’t think I could make it through one class having to use the dictionary every other sentence of my homework, but I asked a lot of questions, talked to my teachers, did my assignments sometimes three times until I got it, and just kept pushing forward. I have excelled in every class, from art to chemistry. I now know I can do anything and that I am worthy of the effort. I also learned I am a leader. People care what I have to say, and... I have learned to follow my heart. I have developed the courage and confidence to advocate for CalWORKs as well as the young girls in Oakland who have been coerced into a life of prostitution, I came into college a shy, scared woman, and I will be graduating a shining, strong example of not only a woman but also a resilient mother.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by: “My CalWORKs counselor, Kimberley Tomlinson, cheered me on [and] set me up for success. I began envisioning how I would feel to complete something. For a woman who once had nothing to be proud of, this was a great revelation. CalWORKs gave me the extra motivation I needed. [Additionally], they have continued to help me meet my county deadlines and learn the ropes of juggling being on welfare, child care, and going to college...When everything came piling down on me, and I desperately needed help emotionally, they were right there...with a great therapist on campus, and my life has dramatically shifted for the better. Michelle Zapata and Melissa Tallerico have been here to support every need.”

Goals for the next five years: “I plan to graduate from a prestigious college with my Bachelor’s in psychology, while still contributing to MISSEY. I will be a certified yoga [instructor] by this summer, so I plan to teach a class or two a week while I finish my schooling. [Next], I plan to apply for either a master’s or doctorate program for clinical psychology studying holistic therapies especially for [those] who have experienced trauma. As for my daughter, I hope to enroll her in Waldorf style school and spend most of my time nurturing her the way I know little girls so desperately need to be nurtured.”
In recommending Jenny Kister-Perry for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Counselor Michelle Newsome writes, "Jenny is an exceptional student. She has navigated through her education with tremendous success. Jenny’s GPA in courses prior to the Rad Tech Program was a 3.88., after being accepted, her GPA, including Rad Tech courses is an overall 3.74. Jenny has a good chance of being hired at her clinical site. Chaffey is very proud of her commitment and success.”

**On the barriers or challenges faced:**

“The challenges that I have faced have mostly been financial. Challenges such as trying to support a family of four with the $10.00/hour my husband earns and trying to study and still have enough time to let my family know that I am always here for them.”

**On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:**

“I have met wonderful friends who support me in my journey of education. By working on campus I've developed additional skills. The best thing was the financial support that I have received, not only through financial aid & scholarships, but also through the CalWORKs program. If it was not for them I would not have been able to complete the course work needed to be where I am today. For this I am eternally grateful.”

**The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:**

“This program has offered counseling & emotional support. Every semester before entering the Radiology program we would review where I stood as far as past classes, my GPA and what classes I would take next. When I was stressed out I could discuss my problems with them. When I got closer to applying for the program they were convinced that I would be accepted and never allowed me to have a doubt in my heart. For that I would like to thank; Mariana Moreno, Michelle Newsome, and Leticia Mowrey.”

**Goals for the next five years:**

“Upon finishing in July I will sit for the ARRT licensing board for my National RT license, then I will pursue my California State license. My goal is to become employed by October 2012 at my home clinical site Kaiser Fontana. After I become an RT I want to gain professional experience to better myself. Eventually I will consider additional modalities such as; Mammography and CT.”
In recommending Angela M. Mc Kindley for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Kathy Dutton writes, “Angela has proven herself to be a very dedicated and determined student. Despite being a single mother of two young children, she has given 100% to her education. She graduated from Chaffey in Spring 2011 with an AS Degree in Gerontology and an AA in University Studies. She earned an over-all GPA of 3.15 while at Chaffey, and transferred directly into the Social Work Program at Cal State University, San Bernardino. Angela has worked at the Financial Aid Department at Chaffey for several years. She is a valued Employee and is very appreciated. I always send students to speak directly with Angela when they have Financial Aid problems, because I know that Angela will answer their questions.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:

“I have survived abusive relationships, addictions and self-esteem and identity issues which I have overcome to reach my goals.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life:

“My attendance at Chaffey College began with positive relationships. At Chaffey I was taught task/time management which improved my self image. I knew that I could be my own cheerleader, advocate for myself, and start to create positive outcomes.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:

“They helped to keep me organized, on track, focused, and goal oriented. They have given me a shoulder to cry on and vent to when needed and kept my goals within reach so that everything wouldn't become overwhelming.”

Goals for the next five years:

“I plan to finish my BA in Social Work and eventually earn a Master’s Degree in Gerontology and a Doctorate Degree in Policy. I want to be able to work for community members who do not have a voice. I want to create smoother policies. The task that CalWORKs students currently have to juggle or comply with are unacceptable; the struggle that the elderly and veterans have to survive are inexcusable. We do not necessarily need to make things easier, but generate concrete steps that are consistent to complete tasks at hand, be it education, medical benefits, or qualifications to receive services. If it was your family member, you'd want the best possible advice and to know that what has been said is accurate to the law. Some policies haven't been changed for years. I am hoping to break apart the missing link and try to adjust departments’ ways of looking at things. There needs to be a better form of communication between all agencies; state, local, and federal. “No one should forget where they came from or give in to be something they are not.”
In recommending Luz Natanson for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Vickie Hay writes, “As an immigrant from Peru, Luz Natanson began her academic career at Orange Coast College with the simple intent to learn English and better function in the United States; yet once she became confident in her own ability to learn, she set her goals much higher. Luz has remained steadfast in her determination to accomplish her aspirations and has refused to let any obstacle or challenge sway her path. Luz has overcome numerous barriers and achieved the greatest of all successes — personal fulfillment, professional satisfaction, and family self-sufficiency. Luz Natanson best exemplifies the purpose and objectives of the CalWORKs program.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced: It was a very difficult and long process to adapt to a new land. My daughter was 18 years old; she talked every day about her boyfriend that she left in Peru, and she was working hard to go back. My son was 16 years old; he missed his friends, school, neighborhood, and country. He was very depressed, all of us were. Else, my little son was 4; he was confused and sad. On the other hand, my husband the musician, idealistic, bohemian, egocentric, just thought about the music, compositions, and himself. He worked out at the gym every day but only worked at odd jobs sporadically. While my husband felt and behaved as a prince, I felt like an illiterate and demeaned person. I could not talk because people spoke English very fast, and I could not understand. I could not go anywhere [no] driver’s license or car, work, friends, or places where I could go. I felt very frustrated, alone and depressed, with no one to listen to me. My husband moved to Florida and when he came back he wanted [a quick] divorce, to remarry. His indifference and willingness to abandon his family scared me. I decided to go to the college and pursue a degree.

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life: I got my A.A. degree and worked for seven years at Orange Coast College as an Outreach Recruiter in the EOPS (Extended Opportunity Program and Services) department. As a recruiter I had the opportunity to encourage high school students to pursue higher education. I worked with the Santa Ana and Garden Grove School District, and I greatly enjoyed helping and motivating the Hispanic community that live in Orange County. Working closely with the counselors in Career Center Department, I learned and understood the students’ needs. I believe that education is not only a way to developing intellectually, but also a way to live more comfortable lives. One can also learn to be more sympathetic and sensible with others.

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by: The CalWORKs program gave me the opportunity and helped me to meet my goals, to see the promise of a new direction, and a chance of self-realization; while at the same time, creating a new vision for my community, family, and myself. I am endeavoring to be a better person each day, doing my best, being a good role model for my kids, working hard, growing both spiritually and emotionally.

Goals for the next five years: As a woman I would like to be prepared in the near future to contribute and work with people and to help them develop effective, coping mechanisms and different awareness of the resolutions to their problems. I believe and aspire for persons to have the right to grow, choose and become their own persons. I also want to see less inequality and discrimination in the world. These values motivated me to pursue my education in Psychology. My plans for the next years include completing a Ph.D., in Educational Psychology from Atlantic International University in December 2014. I am currently employed by the State of California —California Association of Drugs & Alcoholism, as an Addiction Counselor.

Luz Natanson:
Orange Coast College,
Coast Community College District

Area of Study: MS Psychology

Expected Degree Completion: December, 2008
La Royce Campbell  
El Camino College Compton Center  
Compton CC. District

Area of Study: AS Criminal Justice & AA General Education  
Expected Degree Completion: June 2011

In recommending La Royce Campbell for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Patricia L. Bonacic writes, “La Royce is very motivated, cooperative and success oriented.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“One of the challenges I had to overcome in pursuing my degree was having poor time management. Between my family life and being a full time college student, my days were exhausting! If it wasn’t homework, it was the kids, and if it wasn’t the kids it was everything else. Being a single parent of two is a job in itself. Although you have what seems like a million things on your plate, you still find the time to help with homework, and attend sport/school activities. The hardest thing of all is learning how to adapt into the school environment. After not attending school in over ten years, at first it was a little overwhelming! With a little hard work and the support from loved ones, those challenges became easier. As the barriers began to fall one by one, I knew that everything would be ok .”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending El Camino College Compton Center has made a huge difference in my life! From interacting with the staff, learning new things by talking to fellow students with the same educational goals, I was reminded what I always wanted to be growing up: an active educated citizen of society. The CalWORKs program has helped me understand that continuing my education will put me on the road to achieving my goal. My confidence level has dramatically changed with each class I pass and each semester I complete because I’m getting closer to becoming a success. Attending college has truly motivated me to go forth and succeed.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The CalWORKs Program has played a big part in meeting my educational goals. Through their supportive services; academic advisement with the counselor, transportation, books and supplies, and childcare, I was able to concentrate on receiving an AA in General Education as well as an AS in Behavioral Social Science. Due to the new 48 month policy for receiving cash aid my time limit passed. The Compton Center CalWORKs staff made sure I was given an additional year of supportive services, this proved to me that they are there to help.

Goals for the next five years:
“After receiving my degrees, I will transfer to Cal State Dominguez Hills, where I plan to obtain a BS in Criminal Justice. After graduation I plan to work as a Juvenile Probation officer.”
Nichole “Darby” Driscoll Bramer
College of the Desert, Desert

Area of Study: Psychology

Expected Degree Completion: Completed 2009

In recommending Nichole “Darby” Driscoll Bramer for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Carol Lasquade writes, “Nichole has always been focused while she pursued her educational goal as a single mom. While at COD, she proved herself as an exceptional student graduating with a 3.1. Nichole proves to herself and others that no goal is unreachable. She serves as a role model to other CalWORKs students, demonstrating that they can find a balance between school, work, and family.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“During the pursuit of my B.A. degree, many adversities were placed in my path. I was 21, with a 5-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son. My efforts were hampered, with no family or support system...I was 16 years old when my daughter was born. I lacked a high school diploma, [which] threatened my admittance to college. However, with the efforts of dedicated staff, I obtained a GED (with scores high enough to gain additional funding!). In all honestly fatigue and self-doubt might have been my biggest barrier.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“I arrived in California at 19 years old, with my two children and three suitcases. The opportunity to attend community college made a difference in my life, giving me the chance to obtain a four-year degree, something I never [imagined]. Doing my prerequisites at the community college enabled me to transfer to California State University to obtain my B.A. degree without gaining student loans along the way!”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“I can say from the bottom of my heart, without the CalWORKs program and C.A.R.E., I would not have been able to graduate with a 4-year degree, and break the cycle of poverty that plagues the majority of teenage mothers, and inevitably their children. This program, more specifically the support and devotion of its staff, has enabled me to pay it forward in ways I couldn’t have even imagined.”

Goals for the next five years:
“I plan to continue with my current career path where I pass the same kind of devotion and inspiration that was offered to me. I now work for the City of Indio running the California’s Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention program (CalGRIP), working with a diverse subset of teenagers and youth at risk; accomplished through one-on-one case management, and group therapy classes and sessions. The opportunity to assist in breaking the cycle of violence, crime, and poverty that plagues these youth is the homage I could pay to the CalWORKs program. I use myself as an example for the youth, as I reach out and tell them success is obtainable by all who have the courage. Thank you CalWORKs, Thank you.”
In recommending Ron Elsten for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Jodi Benyon writes, “In recommending this student, the program recognizes the multiple barriers Ron had to overcome to reach his academic and personal goals.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced: "I am a 45-year-old single father who has raised my son and daughter by myself for the past 12 years. I had a good career that came to an abrupt end due to a back injury. I could no longer keep up with the physical demands my job required, and I lacked the education it took to move into another position. After suffering the injury, I became addicted to the pain medication that the doctor prescribed. At that point, I knew that I had to seek other opportunities to begin a new career. I decided to look for other alternatives for pain management and get off the pain medications, go to school, and reclaim my future. In addition, both of my children have had physical problems, which have resulted in a heavy financial burden. My son was diagnosed with hearing problems as a baby and has needed continual ear molds and adjustments to his hearing aids. My daughter needs surgery to correct a recessed chin and small mouth that have caused extensive dental and orthodontic issues. I have made monthly trips to Chico (180 miles round trip) for her orthodontic adjustments for the past two years. It has been tough raising teenagers alone while I work and attend school, but I think I have been a positive influence and role model for my children.”

How attending a community college made a difference in your life: “Attending a community college like Feather River (FRC) is the best decision I made since my injury. I was nervous going back to school after 20 years, and after taking the placement test it was determined that I needed to start at the basic skills level in English and math; however, after a couple of semesters at FRC, I quickly improved. Now I am taking a critical thinking class and a trigonometry class, and after this semester, I am transferring to California State University, Humboldt. My time spent in a community college gave me the confidence that I needed to succeed in school. The CalWORKs staff, Learning Center, instructors, and my friends at FRC have been invaluable, giving me encouragement and support. Moreover, because of the support I received, I have the skills to succeed as I transfer to Humboldt State. I was accepted into Humboldt State last August, and I could not have done it without the good foundation Feather River Community College gave me.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by: “I owe much of my success in college to CalWORKs, my worker Pam McKinnon, and the head of the program at FRC Jodi Beynon. They have given me a great deal of support and have enabled me to finish school at FRC. The CalWORKs program loaned me the required textbooks; furthermore, if I were not a part of the program, I would not have the job I have now. Working as a lab technician for Quincy Community Services District was the catalyst that helped me identify my educational and career paths. Jobs in Plumas County are hard to come by, and the program gave me the opportunity to work in a related field while attending college. I have been able to support my children while obtaining my education at FRC. The CalWORKs program gave me the chance to succeed in college, and I am very grateful for their help.”

Goals for the next five years: “After completing my last semester at FRC, I will transfer to Humboldt State University for the fall 2012 semester to continue my schooling. I will continue to support my daughter as she begins her college career, and I will work toward earning my bachelor’s degree in cell and molecular biology, with emphasis on cancer research. After earning my B.S., I will earn my master’s degree at Humboldt or another university better suited to my career path.”
Kimberly King-Martin
Foothill College
Foothill-DA C.C. District

Area of Study: Psychology

Expected Degree Completion: August, 2014

In recommending Kimberly King-Martin for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Sofia Abad writes, “Kimberly has been accepted to the Business Psychology program at Palo Alto University (PAU). She has demonstrated a great deal of dedication on her education by completing the requirements to be accepted to the program. She is not only overcoming financial and housing difficulties, but she finds herself dealing with health issues as well. She is a very strong person that has not given up! She is also willing to help others without reservation. I am happy she is in the path for success.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“When I first began community college I was 28 years old, newly separated from an abusive husband, and had a baby in tow. Housing has been a huge stressor as I have a very limited income. It took two years of house hopping at different friends’ homes but I have finally found the means for a small apartment of my own. My mental and physical health has also tested my determination and dedication throughout my college career. I have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and struggle with depression but mostly anxiety and insomnia. In 2011, I had a massive infection and required emergency surgery which had me at less than 100% for six months.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“I have networked through Work Study (CalWORKs and Federal) to obtain relevant job skills and possible references. I have met so many remarkable people in classes and through programs I receive benefits from. It inspires me to see so many people working to achieve their goals and those that help along the way. Community college has assisted me in finding who I am again, no longer defining myself as a victim but as a survivor and a go-getter! I believe that my experiences in community college have helped me gain confidence in myself and trust in others.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The community college CalWORKs program has helped me meet my goals because of the extensive support system it creates. It helps to know that my questions and concerns will be promptly addressed. The financial support of funds for books, supplies, parking and registration fees relieve an enormous amount of financial stress. The CalWORKs program enables me to concentrate on my education and fulfill the goals I have set for myself, rather than adding more stressors.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My journey with education started late and slow but has really gained momentum in the last year. As soon as I found Palo Alto University and their Business Psychology program I found a renewed sense of motivation. I will be starting at PAU in the Fall of 2012 and will graduate in June 2014. I plan to graduate with a career in Corporate America working in Human Resources Management. My goals are simple, to look as forward to Mondays as I do Fridays, pay my bills with a little extra to spare, and give back to those that helped me reach my goals!”
In recommending Stephanie McGee for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Sofia Abad writes, “Stephanie is an extraordinary student who was chosen not only to represent CalWORKs students but any student who wants to have their voice heard. She is the current Foothill College Student Trustee; some of her duties are to meet with the Chancellor and the President to discuss issues that are affecting the students. Also, she represents the board at various events. Stephanie is committed to her education despite the challenges she faces such as having to move many times and not having enough money to support herself and daughter. Her busy schedule as a single mother and her role as a Trustee do not keep her away from her education goal. Stephanie keeps working hard towards a self-sufficient and successful future. I am so proud to nominate Stephanie.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“Every day is a challenge for my daughter and me. I do my best to teach her to rise above life’s troubles and complications and make the best of the situation. It feels like I am always telling her to make do with less, when all I want to do is give her the stars. Recently, we were faced with having to move unexpectedly. Our landlords had lost their house and we had two weeks to move. I had no idea what we were going to do or where we would live. Once again my daughter and I had to pack up our stuff and move on. I tell her that it is not about what a person has but who they are, and working hard to reach your goals is a part of life. When times get rough - Don’t give up, stay strong and you can accomplish anything. I try my best to stay positive and not let her see me get discouraged, but it is difficult when nothing seems to go as planned. I tell my daughter that we are a team and things will get better. With little money and classes being cut, it is hard for me to remember my advice to stay strong. Many days I feel like I don’t even know how to deal with our personal family life and school. But she always raises my spirits and reminds me how blessed we truly are.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending community college has changed my life. The biggest difference has been my mind frame. I no longer get fed up and feel like I have no way out. I know that college will provide a brighter future for my daughter, and I will not waste this opportunity. I used to think getting a degree would just provide more money, but in fact, my daughter seeing me push myself to get through school has inspired her to want more for herself. My daughter used to want to be a stay at home mom, now she wants to become a zoologist and change the world. I need to stay focused and work hard to complete my degree. I want my daughter to have choices in her life and not have to struggle the way I have. I am her only parent and only chance for a brighter future. I will never give up fighting to get through school; will not fail my daughter or myself.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“CalWORKs has provided me with on campus support such as help with paying for transportation costs, books and day care. These are things that I can’t afford and greatly appreciate.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My plans for the next five years is to complete my AA at Foothill College and transfer to a university. Also, I want to advocate about the importance of higher education and speak out against abuse. I found a way out, and a better future by going to college.”
In recommending Samuel Anthony Doporto for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Susan Sweeney writes, “Tony has overcome many barriers and demonstrates determination to achieve personal and academic goals. He has proven himself to be an excellent student and an excellent employee at Gavilan Community College.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“I have a natural talent as an artist, but a background [in] a labor-type job. In 1999 I was convicted of a violent crime which resulted in serving time in a county jail with felony charges. Which also made finding employment difficult. When I enrolled as a full-time college student at 41 with no previous experience, I doubted that I would be successful. However, I was committed to try everything and anything possible to obtain better opportunities for myself and my daughter. I was able to use my struggles and barriers as a reason to improve my life. As a single father, I wanted to be able to provide for my daughter, and be a positive role model.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“I embraced my new-found life as a college student, and since my initial enrollment, have been able to maintain a 3.3 GPA. In addition to being enrolled full-time, I have also been able to work part-time through financial aid work-study, which helps me support myself and my daughter.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“At Gavilan College I have been able to utilize the resources available to me to get ahead and reach for self sufficiency. CalWORKs work-study has assisted me financially, but it has also motivated me to pursue my goals, and believe that anything is possible.”

Goals for the next five years:
“In May, 2012, I will be receiving an associate degree in Digital Media. I am also considering the possibility of transferring to a local four-year university. I recognize my need to earn a livable wage, and at the same time know how furthering my education even late in life can only be an asset towards my long term goal of touching people’s lives through my art.”
Veronica Jimenez:
East Los Angeles College,
Los Angeles CC District

Area of Study: Social & Behavioral Science / Social Work

Expected Degree Completion: 2015

In recommending Veronica Jimenez for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2011, CalWORKs Director Angelica Toledo writes, “An extraordinary student and mother who has overcome many barriers to accomplish her dreams and goals, and to become a self-sufficient person. A role model for her children and for every student that crosses her path.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:
“As a mother of four, I had to sacrifice the quality of care, leaving my children in the hands of my mother all day in order for her to nurture them. My kids [said] that they needed at least an hour of my time, and to do homework together. Unfortunately, I never had this time because I had a rigorous schedule. My sister always [provided] homework assistance. I learned that putting family needs to the side is not a good habit, because I missed [many] special moments.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending a CC has made a tremendous change in my life because it gave me the skills necessary to transfer to a university. It gave me the motivation to strive for career training. I then noticed that I deserved better and decided to further my education. Special thanks to Ms. Nancy Ramirez for being an excellent English teacher who always went an extra mile to help us succeed. Ms. Ramirez prepared me to pass my WPE (an entrance exam) at CSU, Los Angeles, [for] which [I am truly grateful].”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
I was extremely fortunate to have been in such a great program because they guided me into the triumph of education. I received help completing book requests, education planning, and student work study. I needed significant help to handle the responsibilities of school and work study. “I also appreciate the tutors that helped me to pass all of my math classes and on time.”

Goals for the next five years:
“I am currently a senior in the Social Work program at CSULA, and I am initiating my internship in the fall of 2012. My future plans are to apply to graduate school in forensic social work to be able to advocate for a better life for children and families. With my concentration, I plan to evaluate criminal victims, and work along with the juvenile corrections systems.”
In recommending Diane Van Poelgeest for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Marie T. Elguira writes, “Passion is a word that describes Diane. She is a woman of much dedication to her future career. Diane has committed herself these last years to preparing for a better future. She is not only a single parent but the caretaker for her mother. Her goal is to be an Educator, to teach students to express their feelings, challenges, and dreams on paper. She has the desire and the ability to relate to students of all ages. Diane will be transferring to a 4yr. University where she will be completing her educational goals. We acknowledge her hard work and commend her for the value that she brings to Education.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:

“Of the many challenges I have faced in returning to school to pursue a long-help dream, three stood out. The first of these was the fact that I am a single mom and the sole caregiver for an ailing parent. Another challenge was financial. I had lost my job in 2008 due to many factors. The economy being one of the largest, I [also] could not find work. I lost my home in 2007 and my son and I were forced to move in with my mom [but] in 2009 we lost this home as well. The last and by far the heaviest barrier was my age. When I first started at LBCC I was nearly 48 years old. However, I refused to let my own weaknesses and limitations set me back.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:

“Not only has attending community college rounded out my own maturity by putting me in touch with an entirely different generation of people, but it has given me the time I needed to relearn how to learn and allowed me to build a strong foundation for moving forward in my academic goals. Because there are so much cultural and age diversity in the community college setting, I actually found many people who were just as eccentric as I am. This sense of like-mindedness created for me a sense of belonging I never experienced before.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:

“I cannot say enough about how helpful and supportive the CalWORKs office is at LBCC. The counselors and support staff have been extremely generous in their efforts on my behalf. Compassion is not a word to them, it is a philosophy. They kept me on task for my goals. I feel that if half the students attending school received CalWORKs Program service, there would be a greater number of students completing their goals.”

Goals for the next five years:

“At the end of five years I plan to have my MFA in creative writing with a minor in history as well as teaching credentials for the elementary school grade level. Another drive I have is to teach young people how to find their passion and confidence in a world that oftentimes overlooks the importance of these factors.”

Diane Van Poelgeest
Long Beach City College (LBCC),
Long Beach CC District

Area of Study: Child Development and English Transfer

Expected Degree Completion: May 2014
In recommending Martha Gonzales for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Guadalupe Jara writes, “She has overcome many challenges involving mental health and is ready to transfer Spring 2012.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“In 2008, I went from being a housewife to a single mom and sole provider for my son; [and] my husband disappeared due to his mental illness. [This] has been an emotional roller coaster. I have a background in photography and art, but this is not a stable career to raise a child alone. So, I pursued a Spanish degree to tutor. I had done this before and it brought in good income. My challenges are that there has not been a stable budget for my student worker job, and I have been unemployed in the summer and winter [sessions]. Moreover, my son has ADHD and there have been a lot of challenges at school and at home. I have been taking parenting classes to learn coping skills [and] now have been attending my son’s school to help the teachers with his ADHD...Budget cuts [caused] Cedar Sinai [to cut] its psych department where I had received] coping skills therapy. I no longer have my team of skilled professionals to guide me through challenges. School is a challenge because I have Dyslexia. difficulties reading and writing. My plan is to become an art therapist to help others with these challenging life adjustments.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending a community college has helped gain stability in my life. LACC is where I discovered I had a learning disability. There is a department that focuses on helping students that need special assistance. My GPA went up and I now know new skills to help me academically. I will now have an AA degree at the end of Spring 2012. My journey is difficult, but I have a supportive community with my community college.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“Being a participant of the CalWORKs office has been Godsend. They guide me step-by-step to be able to financially take care of books, materials and keep me current with paper work needed to be in the program. Because of the CalWORKs office I have a job during the academic semester. I am able to study and work in the same location. Jobs are very difficult to get and the CalWORKs program brought stability to me and my family. The counselor there, Kathy, has changed my life. I told her I had gone to an art school back in 1993. She encouraged me to get my degree. If everything goes right, I should get my bachelor’s this spring. I have made it this far; I just need to keep putting one step in front of the other.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My plan is to get my AA degree and a bachelor’s in June of 2012. I am applying to grad school at LMU to be in the Art Therapy Department, it should take me three years to graduate. Meanwhile, I would like to have a student job in that department along with doing private tutoring in Spanish this summer. I [would also] like to get certified in the NAMI program, [and] also continue my studies and get a PhD in nutrition. I believe that healthy food is the key to mentally stable health. I dream about changing the way the school system feeds the American children.”
Magali Sanchez-Hall  was recommended for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012 by CalWORKs Director
Mercedes Yanez

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“Some of the challenges I had to overcome while completing my studies were balancing homework, school and caring for my nine month old daughter. I had to do some strategic planning in arranging to drop off/pick up for childcare. Due to the 32 hour required activity finding time to spend with her was also difficult. It took me two semesters before I got a sense of balance. However, I still struggle with this issue because the classes I need to take sometimes conflict with work hours as well as back to school night and other special things that require my attention.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending community college has definitely improved my English communication skills. When I first came to this country from Viet Nam, my English was not very good and limited, I had a terrible time trying to communicate. I was afraid to speak because of my accent and I was unable to make friends. Now, I feel more confident when speaking and I am able to understand my professors when they lecture. Attending community college has definitely boosted my self esteem; I feel that I can achieve my educational & career goals and become self sufficient.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“It was two years before I enrolled in the CalWORKs program at El Camino College. Prior to enrolling in the program, I worried & stressed about how I was going to pay for my books, parking, health fees and things of that sort. The CalWORKs program helped me get organized and offered support services to help me get the things I needed for school. Had I attended school in Viet Nam, I would not have been afforded this kind of assistance. I am truly grateful for the services rendered unto me.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My plans for the next five years are to transfer to Cal State LA or Cal State Dominguez Hills, graduate and receive a Bachelors of Science degree in Business. After graduation I hope to get a job in the accounting field. It is also my intention to further my education by obtaining a Masters in Business Management and become a business owner.”
In recommending Tiffany Gonzalez for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Angela Aghajanian writes, “student is an exemplary student and mother with a 3.6 GPA...is beyond motivated to succeed and become an advocate for the less fortunate.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“There were a few challenges to overcome. I am 42 years old with three children; two have special needs. It is a challenge to have a child with Autism, much less try to go to college full-time. I have been so determined to be successful in my college experience, that when there were obstacles thrown in front of me, it pushed me harder to succeed. I won’t let anything stand in my way. I want to show my 14-year-old daughter that you can do anything if you set your mind to it, no matter how hard it may be, and no matter how old you are. I am from San Francisco, where all my family is, [and losing close] family support can be tough at times as well. I advocate for my children at all times. There is much work for the parent who has three kids that all have Individual Education Program's in place.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending LA Mission College has been a great experience for me. I have learned so much from some really wonderful instructors in the child development department who have helped me greatly [with] knowledge on how to understand, deal with, and help my Autistic children. One teacher in their life that has a real impact for me is Mrs. Daims. She took the time outside of the classroom to give me advice when I was experiencing difficulties. Her help and advice was valuable, and just what I needed to help my children. I will always be thankful [and] hold her near and I will never forget her even after my journey at LA Mission College. I dropped out of high school at a very young age; never in my wildest dreams [did I think] that I would be recognized achieve, full-time Dean’s Honors. It was] incredible for me to have all three of my children see me receive that award.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The CalWORKs program at LA Mission College has been incredible. The people there, are truly helpful and understand me when I am having a rough time, and [need] guidance. [It doesn't] feel [like] a business transaction when I walk into their office. They are welcoming, comforting, [and] help me understand everything. The community at Mission College is really a great one. I have had students help me along the way, as well. I have made some really great friends here. I am happy I didn't let my fear of going back to school at my age hold me back, I have gained so much, and I feel so blessed.”

Goals for the next five years:
“First thing would be to get my certificate in Child Development and AA. After that, I want to transfer to a university. I want to work with children who have special needs as a child social worker; to be an advocate for those children whose voice may not be heard but who truly need to be. Once I have a good job I dream of being able to buy a home, maybe even open a home day care center one day. I volunteered in our community called MEND, at food banks that help the needy with clothing and medical needs. I have had to use their services in my time of need so it felt really good to be able to give back. I want to be able to find more time and continue to volunteer there and help others.”
In recommending Marlene Yacoub for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Angela Aghajanian writes, “Marlene is a motivated student and mother with a 3.8 GPA who is very inspired to be successful considering all her hardships.”

**On the barriers or challenges faced:**

“I have faced numerous barriers, including arriving in the U.S as a refugee from Iraq. With me I brought my three children, my husband and my blind father. I had to introduce everyone in my family to a new society in a new country and encourage them conquer the language barrier. During my studies I had to take care of my father who had a stroke. I began working to gain experience and found myself struggling to balance my families needs. I took buses, read maps, and asked people how to get back and forth from the college. In order to study, there were times I would wait until everyone was sleep to finish up my homework. My challenges have been simplified and have taught me that anything is possible.”

**On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:**

“Attending a community college has definitely made a change in the lives of my family and I. Without a doubt, communicating with people has enhanced the level of which I speak English, even though it is not my first language. Knowing that I am doing great in my classes and that my professors are proud of me has improved my self-esteem. The CalWORKs program has been amazing. They pay waivers and help me with the purchase of books and supplies. I really appreciate the opportunities provided here for students.”

**The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:**

“This program has been a great push for me to make changes in my life. It has enabled me to have a strong and hardworking character while doing the best I can for my loved ones. My educational goals and financial needs have been facilitated and my efforts have been rewarded by this program. The staff is helpful and they always wear smiles on their faces.”

**Goals for the next five years:**

“Plans are created based on the optimistic vision of creating a good educational goal in my life. I’d like to earn a B.A in Child Development. Obtaining this degree will be possible if I maintain the same level of resilience and creativity. My children are my primary concern, so I would like to support them until they are able to build their own academic futures.”
In recommending Fred Bustamante for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Coordinator, Ellie Rabani writes, “Excellent GPA, 3.96. Excellent dedication, goal oriented, serious, team player, resourceful, and committed.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:
“After losing my job as a contractor, losing my house, being homeless for few months, being a single father, I learned to challenge my new life and take control and do something about it. I came back to school and I am pursuing a new major and life style.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“I was able to learn more about myself and my abilities. I have learned that I can basically do anything I put my mind to, found a work study position which enabled me to network, and communicate with people in the community. I met many instructors who care about me and try to help me. I appreciate government assistance. I have a lot of support. And I know I will make it.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“I receive educational, vocational, and personal counseling. CalWORKs staff helped me to achieve my dreams again. I received scholarships and work study which helped tremendously to pay for my bills. Educational planning and counseling helped me to be on the right track and reach my educational goals faster and better. I am proud of daily work and I appreciate the opportunities and care I receive from this program.”

Goals for the next five years:
“To continue working on/off campus to support myself and my son. Obviously I would like to transfer to a four year college to receive my B.S and raise my son in a very safe environment. I am searching for a more permanent job at this point. I applied, and I am on the LACCD list for [various] positions. I am looking forward to the next chapter of my life, to be completely off aid, and self-sufficient, to give back to the community and CalWORKs program.”
In recommending Faranak Samia for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Abbey Klein writes, “Faranak’s commitment to education and her courage in overcoming challenges of language, culture, and limited income is a wonderful example of the success of an immigrant pursuing the American Dream.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“I was born in Iran. Living there was hard for minority religions, so we decided to leave our country in 2005. I was alone for the first three years when we moved to Seattle, five months pregnant, with no one to take care of me. I was scared that I wouldn’t be able to support my family, so it was a really tough time for me.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Community college has made a huge difference and played a very important role in reaching my educational dream. The diversity of the school made me feel comfortable and familiar with different cultures. The small classes and friendly teachers were the best part. Also the Financial Aid department helped me pay my tuition, it was affordable unlike a university. I used the Learning Center for math and environmental studies tutoring. I am really happy that I have this opportunity to become better educated and get my Accounting degree.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“If it wasn’t for the CalWORKs program I probably wouldn’t be close to transferring to CSUN and earning my B.A. The opportunities that this program has given me are huge and unforgettable. The Director Abbey Klein has helped me a lot and she always has supported me and my family. Also Niloo Hakkakzadeh, a counselor who speaks my language helped me to reach my goals. And Vicki Stewart helped students do their paperwork on time. The work study program helped me earn a bit extra while studying and the County’s help with books, supplies, and transportation made being a student easier. I couldn’t imagine paying for my books, I appreciate it very much. Everything for this office is perfect.”

Goals for the next five years:
“I will transfer to CSUN in the Fall of 2012 and receive my Bachelor’s degree in the next two years. After that I would like to find a job related to my major and then go for my Master’s. Following that I will become a teacher and help community college students get educated and explore the power of knowledge. I really want to be successful in my life and be able to provide everything for my family.”
In recommending Catherine Hale Henry for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Kolleen Ostgaard writes, “Ms. Hale Henry has an amazing spirit and commitment to improving her life and that of her family. She has worked very hard for many years to complete her educational goals and we are thrilled that she is graduating in [May, 2012].”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:
“Anything worthy of having is worth working for.” A quote...continually heard from my mother...growing up, [is] one of my favorite mottos. [It] has provided the silver lining for me as I worked through life’s obstacles. Being a single mother of two, nothing seems more challenging than pursuing my educational and career goals while attempting to balance bed times, and midterms...neither of my parents graduated from college, and my mother spent much of my adolescence going through numerous surgeries. While this left me feeling as if I had to be the caregiver and child at the same time, it provided me the framework to work hard and hold fast to my goals. As an adult I found myself financially disadvantaged and had to utilize county assistance. This allowed me the opportunity to continue going to school, take care of my two children while pursuing a more stable career. Attending American River College (ARC) was the beginning step toward fulfilling the requirements for the county with CalWORKs and completing my degree... numerous times I thought to myself does it have to be this hard. But then I would recall my motto and know that in the end it would all be worth it...leaving a better legacy for my children.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Once I began attending ARC, it seemed like everything was going in the right direction. The employees were caring and warm. There was a certain support system that every office seemed to offer. Attending a community college made a huge difference in my life, because I was offered a sense of community that cared about me and my success.”

College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The CalWORKs office provided me with academic and career counseling and...a job. The guidance and assistance I had lacked from adolescence was filled with this office and...college. My [future] goals became crystal clear [while] working with CalWORKs personnel. I was able to complete my Associate’s degree before transferring to California State University Sacramento (CSS) to purse a Bachelor’s degree in Communications.”

Goals for the next five years:
“...I plan to complete a Master's degree in Social Services and continue on to complete a PhD...My goal is to help other young women understand their struggles, see the silver lining..., and provide them the guidance to work toward their futures and dreams.”
Andrea Babauta
Cosumnes River College
Los Rios C.C. District

Area of Study: Human Services

Expected Degree Completion: May, 2012

In recommending Andrea Babauta for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Supervisor Salena Mamuyac writes, “Andrea is a strong, independent woman and is an inspiration for others who are trying to overcome domestic violence. When Andrea first came to the CalWORKs program at CRC she was determined to pursue her educational goal, and despite her challenges, she has continued moving forward.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“...I am a proud Mexican-American. There have been many obstacles in my life that have detoured my education...I am a twenty-three year survivor of domestic violence, a single mother of four children, and the first in my family to attend college, and have overcome chronic homelessness...Through life experience, community service, and passion to give back to my community; I am determined to become a community college counselor.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“...I feel that this is a new start in my life...attending college...has given me the opportunity to gain...knowledge and resources...[and] led me in the direction of Human Services....Through my education and life experience I have been able to achieve a level of understanding of the challenges single mothers and families face...Not only do my children have a good positive role model to look up to but it also opens up the door to a better future. My own daughter now attends college with me, which has allowed me to guide her through her first year...Cosumnes River College has grounded me to stay focused and take responsibility for my own future while providing for my children.

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“...CalWORKs [helped me receive] part-time [employment] through...Work Study,... and Child Action to pay for my son’s daycare while attending college,...[provided] book vouchers...[and] was always there to assist and advise me every step of the way...[which] will provide me with the fortitude to... complete my education...[and] serve students in their educational aspirations. [We] faced some setbacks along the way...[but] the CalWORKs program...was always there to assist and advise me every step.”

Goals for the next five years:
“I hope to get my Bachelors degree and later a Masters in Social Work. I would like to come back to Cosumnes River College as a Counselor and possibly pursue my other goal and that would be a Licensed Family & Marriage Therapist working for W.E.A.V.E. After volunteering with My Sister’s House which is a domestic violence shelter and receiving my 45 hour training in D.V. and Human Trafficking, I feel I would be able to give back to my community that has
In recommending Kenneth Prado for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Kathy Valcarcel writes, “Kenneth has worked on campus as a peer mentor and has been an advocate for the CalWORKs program as well as getting an education the entire time he has been here. He is honest and forthright with his suggestions to students he talks with. In addition, he has attended all the workshops provided to get information about programs and services available to CalWORKs students. He started 2nd Chance and I watched him award several scholarships to students at the scholarship ceremony last year.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced: “There have been [many challenges] I have experienced in my lifetime. I was a foster child and then adopted at the age of five... a victim of beatings by adults at the age of 12. At the eighteen years old I enlisted in the United States Marine Corp, but unfortunately I was the victim of a drive-by shooting which resulted in a medical discharge from the military. The shooting resulted in my stay in a hospital for one-and-a-half months in which I had to learn how to walk again. [Many organs were damaged as a result of the shooting] I went into respiratory arrest twice, lost a major portion of my blood, and had a blood clot in my left leg [and my recovery was a year long process]. A negative outcome from the shooting was my abuse of drugs and alcohol and the eventual incarcerations that I brought upon myself. The abuse of drugs and alcohol became an addiction and the years of incarceration lasted for the better part of eighteen years of my life, until I was thirty-five years old. That is when my life changed.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life: “[Attending] Mt. San Jacinto College is one of the best decisions that I have made in my life [MSJC] provided me the necessary tools for success, and let me take responsibility for my decisions and actions, regardless of my past mistakes. I have been blessed to meet students, staff, and faculty that started their education in similar a similar way. [Many] students that attend MSJC come from a socially and economically challenged environment, where finances and education is hard to come by, so education sometimes takes a back burner to employment. MSJC gave me an opportunity to work on campus through...work study in which I have been a mentor and SGA worker. Since attending MSJC in 2008 I became involved in the Student Government Association as a Senator and the Student Senate Representative. I was able to put together a presentation and make a model bus shelter for our San Jacinto Camus which resulted in two new bus shelters erected in May 2011. I have also been able to start a campus club called the “2nd chance”—An Empowerment Program to help formerly incarcerated students, former addicts, and those effected by the before mentioned individual in their educational journey at MSJC since October 2010 has hand [ed] out six scholarships to MSJC student.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by: “The program has been great, if not a necessity, to my success in school at community college level. I was able to possess textbooks that otherwise I would have been unable to purchase. I was also able to walk-in to the office and talk to the director any time that she was available to do so. I have had a lot of barriers to overcome while attending MSJC and was given honorable advice in a lot of areas in my personal life and my student life. The help and counseling that I received help me to become the man that is writing this application letter, a hardworking, trustworthy citizen, husband, father, and friend in society today.”

Goals for the next five years: “are to maintain my relationship with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I am not afraid to say that my accomplishments are due to his grace, forgiveness, hard work, and a strong wife to support me. After graduating on May 31, 2012, I plan to transfer to Azusa Pacific University to obtain my Bachelor’s Degree in Organizational Leadership. I already work in the Substance Abuse field, and want to eventually work in some aspect of higher education and student success. If a community college can give and help out an individual like myself, then why not help out another student on their educational journey. My name is Kenneth William Prado, and I am a graduate and success of a California Community College.”
In recommending Jennifer Sharp for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Yolanda Aguirre writes, "Jennifer has had to overcome several setbacks in her journey towards self-sufficiency. Jennifer was one of the unfortunate individuals who suffered sudden job loss in the face of the economic downturn. As Jennifer related to me “I had to go to the County Office twice in order to apply for aid. The first time I went, I sat in the parking lot for a long time and couldn’t bring myself to go in. The second day I sat in the parking lot and cried for two hours, until I finally had the courage to go inside. I couldn’t believe it had come to this. I had always been able to support myself, but I had to apply, I had no money or food.” Despite Jennifer’s job loss, stable housing and income, Jennifer chose to seek a longer-term solution. With an 11th grade education, a learning disability and fear of failure, Jennifer applied to Fullerton College in Spring 2009. Three years later, Jennifer has earned her GED, is currently recovering from major health issues and is excited about graduating next year and transferring to Cal State San Bernardino.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:

"In the process of achieving my degree I have had to overcome many challenges including an unstable living situation, health problems, and a learning disability. However, with the guidance and ongoing support of the CalWORKs program I have been able to remain on track and continue on my way to a better future within a reasonable amount of time. With the loss of my job I also lost a great deal of independence and self-worth however, the pursuit of my education has brought this back more than before, making me believe that I have the control to change my life for the better. Along with the encouragement of the CalWORKs program, perseverance has been my key to success. Recently, health problems derailed my plans, but with the support and encouragement of my CalWORKs counselor, I was able to find solutions so that I wouldn’t miss out on a semester due to surgery."

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:

“Attending community college has led to big changes in my life, most importantly, regaining my self-worth which I had lost from the many lows I experienced after losing my job. Attending school has made me believe I can make a real difference, not only in my life, but in my daughter’s as well. Attending college will not only improve my financial future but also my daughter’s future, by showing her that education is important. For the first time, I believe that I can achieve my goals. Hard work truly pays off.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:

“The CalWORKs program has helped me to remain focused even in difficult times and during personal setbacks. I have learned to refine my goals, to navigate the complex educational system and to develop resources for my success. The CalWORKs staff has always been available to help with solutions to personal issues so that I can remain focused on my education and be able to complete it. They have always been a critical source of ongoing support.”

Goals for the next five years:

“In a year, I will be receiving my AA degree in Graphic Design. I will then be transferring to Cal State San Bernardino to earn my Bachelor’s Degree. During this time, I will be publishing my graphic design work to better ensure my future career by building a strong portfolio. Ultimately, I will be pursuing a career in the publication or advertising arena. I aspire to become an Art Director for a large publisher.”
In recommending Penny Wu for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Mary San Agustin writes, “Penny has been an exceptional student who is hard-working and dedicated to succeeding in college and in life. She is currently enrolled in 19.5 units and plans to transfer to CSU San Marcos this Fall. She has a GPA of 3.11!”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“The challenges and barriers I have overcome pursuing my degree are transportation, health issues, and childcare. Transportation has been difficult because my car was impounded my first semester at Palomar College. I did not have the money to replace the car or purchase a new one which made it difficult to get to school and transport my son to daycare. After a lot of talks and lectures, my parents finally helped me with a car. My health issues included injuring my knee and being diagnosed with sleep apnea. I am thankful my doctor was able to figure it out and I am getting treatment. Daycare was extremely expensive and hard for me to cover my share of the cost. Luckily, the principal arranged a payment plan that I could afford.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending community college has made a big difference in my life. It has given me confidence in my abilities to accomplish tasks, helped me with time management, multitasking abilities, goal-orientation, and helped me become more social. Before attending Palomar, I had no idea what to do with my time. I had a hard time accomplishing my goals and did not think I would be successful at school. Coming to Palomar has helped me prove to myself that I can do it.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The CalWORKs program has helped me meet my goals, guided my educational planning, helped me accomplish my goals and overcome barriers, and find AA's or certificates that I qualify for. They also helped me tackle the completion of forms for transfer, financial aid, and graduation.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My plans for the next five years are to get my BA in Human Development, finish my teaching credentials, and find a job in teaching. I plan to teach preschool through second grade.”
In recommending Kimberly Ussery, for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Benita Baines provided no comment.

On the barriers or challenges faced:
"Being a single mom, it was a tough decision between pursuing higher education or a job. After attempting multiple career paths which included acting, dentistry, and even early childhood education, I finally came to the conclusion that my success wouldn't be evident until I was doing something that I loved. There were issues with childcare, time management, transportation and, of course, financial stability. I have spent many nights with only a few hours of sleep due to studying. I have been called out of classes for issues regarding my sons. I often worried if the choices that I made would lead to any security of a career at the end of my schooling. So many worries proved to be extremely frustrating. Regardless of the obstacles I have endured, I managed to stay focused and maintained excellent grades (averaging between 3.5 and 4.0) in school."

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
"Attending community college has taught me how to balance and prioritize different areas of my life. I have met and worked with experienced chefs who have opened my eyes to the many exciting careers in the culinary industry. These chefs have also taught me about the good, the bad and the ugly aspects of my career choice. I have learned that, as long as you are motivated from within, you can do anything that you want. It is never too late to pursue your dreams."

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
"The CalWORKs program helped me to meet some financial needs while attending my first semester at Laney. Also, the CalWORKs coordinator, Benita, has always given me her attention when I needed to talk and has encouraged me on my educational journey. I am grateful for the program and that I was able to receive some assistance to help get through school."

Goals for the next five years:
"My plans for the next five years include, applying for USF, SFSU, or Cal State Hayward to pursue my Bachelors degree. While I am in school I plan on continuing to cater for different corporations, businesses, family and friends, and to continue to network in order to build a clientele for my business. I also plan on joining the American Culinary Federation in hopes of furthering my knowledge of the industry and of meeting other chefs who have traveled the road I am just beginning. I also want to volunteer and provide services to my children's classes (i.e. cooking demonstrations and nutrition information). I even thinking about starting a comedy club with a restaurant, but, of course, I'm starting with the smaller goals first."
In recommending Whitney Chaves for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Nena Baldizon-Rios writes, “Student transferred into Nursing major at the university level and will graduate with BSN 2013.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“I met my soulmate, Brian, and we welcomed our beautiful baby girl, Gabriella, into the world. Unfortunately, we started our family during the onset of an enormous recession which required us to both act quickly to make ends meet. We decided that education would be our only hope for providing for our family. We shared a car and even attended three campuses at one time. There were times when I thought I couldn’t make it any further and I relied on those who supported me most during these times. We never had much time or money to spend on anything. Everything that we invested our time and money in were basic essentials. Even now, we continue to live this way as we are reaching the finish line. However, that’s what you must remember while you struggle: this is only temporary. When I feel guilty because I can’t play as much with my daughter or I can’t buy her that toy she desperately wants, I think to myself ‘it’s okay, it’s only temporary.’ ”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending Santiago Canyon College was the best decision we ever made. It provided a social network, a little family. I made many friends during study groups and in the MASH center. I worked in admissions and made some friends there as well. I will never forget the phenomenal instruction that I received at SCC! They thoroughly prepared me for the university setting and I am very thankful for that. Additionally, EOPS provided me with a sense of community, resources, advising, and counseling that I greatly needed and appreciated! I feel extremely fortunate to have been a part of such a wonderful program.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The best part of the CalWORKs program through the community college was the counseling. Meeting with a counselor on a regular monthly basis provided a level of guidance and accountability that many students don’t have regularly. In this case that bar was raised to include these meetings, reviewing goals, and meeting hourly attendance, study requirements, [and] grades. Entrance into nursing school is very competitive and I knew to have a chance I needed the highest grades possible.”

Goals for the next five years:
“I plan to pursue my nursing career as an Intensive Care Unit nurse, then apply for a master’s program in order to obtain an advanced practice degree in the field of nursing. During my first few years as a nurse I also plan to travel and spend more time with my family, specifically my daughter.”
Maria Pedraza  
Rio Hondo, Rio Hondo CC District

Area of Study: AA Social Behavior & Self Development / Child Development

Expected Degree Completion: May, 2012

In recommending Maria Pedraza for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Christine Aldrich writes, “Maria is a very conscience person and extremely motivated to complete her educational goal. She has always displayed the most positive and enthusiastic outlook no matter the obstacles she’s...endured.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“I had many challenges and barriers to overcome to pursue my degree: first transportation, sometimes I had to struggle for my bus fare; my child’s disability would keep me from focusing on my education. His teachers would interrupt me while I was in class, studying for a test, or doing homework because they would not know how to handle his behavior in an appropriate way the teacher notified me that he had another disorder called Emotional Disturbance [he was later diagnosed with] even more disabilities such as Depression and Mental Illness and was placed in a psychiatric hospital It was extremely difficult to concentrate for my finals] having my son so far away and in that place.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending college made a 180 degree turn in my life because I never imagined myself coming to college and getting much more than a high school education. Thinking back before attending college, I saw myself working in a minimum wage job, such as McDonald’s and just making it to survive. Now that I am going to be a college graduate for the second time in a span of one year, I am not only a role model for my child but I am also teaching him that your dreams can come true if you put your mind to it.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“CalWORKs is an awesome program to have at the college I attend. [CalWORKs] made my life a little easier, [I can] drop off my required paperwork [and] if I have any questions I could just ask. CalWORKs has helped me with my supplies and book requests, MARs, progress reports, training verification, and daily schedules. Also, the counselors guide me on which classes to take so that I don’t get courses I don’t need or take extra time to graduate.

Goals for the next five years:
“In the next five years, my plans are to receive my second degree [May 2012]. It will be my A.A Degree in General Studies with an emphasis in Social Behavior and Self Development. After this I will be transferring to CSULA and pursuing my B.A Degree in Rehabilitation Services, graduating in 2014. Then I will pursue my M.A Degree in Counseling and graduate in 2015. Lastly, work in my career and enjoy life to the fullest alongside my child, giving him what he needs, and continue being his role model.”
Shaunna M. Sutter
Norco College,
Riverside CC District

Area of Study: Human Services/Business Management

Expected Degree Completion: June 2014

In recommending Shaunna M. Sutter for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Daniela McCarson
writes, “She has committed herself to achieving her academic goals, but so much more. Shaunna currently maintains a 3.5 GPA,
is an honor student at Norco College, and also the President of the Honor Society. She is involved in the community through
volunteer efforts. Shaunna is committed to achieving her goals but, more importantly, she also makes a point to inspire others to
not give up on their goals. Shaunna is very involved in cultural and club fundraising activities on campus. Giving back is very
important to her.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“At the young age of 21, I was a divorced single mom of two small boys. My lack of self-confidence led
me to get involved with drugs. I was heavily addicted to methamphetamines for one year. While involved
with drugs, I received a felony drug charge, lost my home and my children, went to jail, and spent three
years on probation. Although I wanted to attend college, I was not eligible for financial aid due to my
felony charge. Finally, in 2010 when my record was expunged, I enrolled in classes at Norco College.
If it were not for the support of my parents, my children and I would have been homeless.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending a community college at the age of 31 has opened my eyes to a new world and given me
confidence that I have not felt for many years. Before attending Norco College, I felt as if I would never
succeed in life and that I would always be judged for my past. I have been accepted at Norco College
with open arms. Having a sense of belonging at Norco College has given me hope that I will be able to
provide for my children on my own one day, and it also allows me to teach my children that no matter
the trials and tribulations one faces in life, one can always succeed and become a successful person.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The CalWORKs program helped me to believe that I could change the future and provided me with
tools to help. Without this great program, my future would have consisted of working as a server or
working temporary jobs with no steady income to support my children. The program staff provides me
with direction, support, and advocacy with the county and assistance with school supplies. The coordi-
nator often sends out email reminders to ensure accountability with our program obligations and good
standing with the county. They offer a friendly and welcoming environment.”

Goals for the next five years:
“My first priority is to make sure that my children are geared toward college, then to complete my B.A.
in Business at Cal State Fullerton, and finally, to get a Master’s degree in Counseling / Educational
Services. I also want to be able to obtain a job with a company that values my accomplishments, leader-
ship and work ethic. I want to be able to move out my parents’ home and give my children their own
home with their own rooms.”
In recommending Mario Caballero for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Anne Pattison writes, “Mario is an outstanding student and his hard work at RCC has paid off. He completed the RCC Culinary Academy with a 3.7 GPA. He was hired at a restaurant after completing the program, and as a result was able to get off of cash assistance. While working 34 hours a week, he is continuing as a full-time RCC student with the goal to transfer to earn a BA in Business. He continues to have excellent grades and is extremely motivated to accomplish his educational and career goals.

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“Finding a balance between school, work and home is not easy. I work evening hours and my wife works during the day and I set about 20 hours a week for school work so there is little personal time right now for us. I’ve had to put aside things I enjoyed doing because I had no time or money for them such as bowling or softball. I am divorced, but remarried, and have visitation with my youngest daughter and at times I’ve had to give some of that up for school or work. Trying to find a job was not easy because most of the jobs I applied for were days. I wanted full time but at nights and I didn’t find that for a long time.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“I attended Fullerton Community College from 1985-86 but I didn’t finish. I got married and never returned. In 2009 I was laid off from my job and then I decided I was done with working in the construction field. I had developed a passion for cooking and was looking to fulfill that. I had looked at Art Institute and Le Cordon Bleu but they were outrageously expensive. Someone told me that RCC had a culinary program. I looked and found it. I applied and on the first try (because it’s a lottery system that does not happen very often) I was chosen. From there I decided I wanted a restaurant and set my path for a business degree. RCC has helped me realize a goal. I will at least have an AS degree which is something I never really was ambitious about or thought would happen over 25 years ago. My next goal is to get my BS in business from Cal State San Bernardino.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“CalWORKs is a good program and probably the best thing about it is the ability to get priority registration* for classes. Classes are hard to get and even harder now with all the cutbacks. Priority registration was really helpful these past two semesters in getting the classes I needed. They also help in finding employment.”

Goals for the next five years:
I should be finishing up at RCC with my transfer classes in the summer and plan to start at CSUSB in the fall. I plan to finish in 2 years with my BS in Business from there. I hope to have a restaurant open in about 5 years if finances allow for it.”

*Priority registration for CalWORKs students is not available at all California Community Colleges.
In recommending Kayla Lynch for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Program Dean Marco Cota writes, “Kayla is a great example for other students.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“I was kicked out of a private Christian university after becoming pregnant and being open with my sexuality. At the University, I felt it necessary to hide being a lesbian and when I came out to my coaches and administrators I felt pressured to date the opposite sex. I became pregnant and had to leave school by the end of the semester. My girlfriend stuck with me through everything. I am the first, of six children, to graduate from high school, and the only one in my family attending college. I travel to school three times a week for 8 hours. I'm determined to finish my AA degree and make a better life for me and my daughter.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending community college has made a huge difference in my life compared to a four year University. I feel that I am able to be myself and meet others like myself. It’s a very friendly environment to learn and has all types of student services that helped me while attending school.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“I love the CalWORKs program at SBVC. This was my first time receiving any type of student assistance, CalWORKs helps me get to school with gas cards, and provides my books. I didn’t think that I would graduate for a couple of years but my counselor Leslie really encouraged me to finish. I’m always able to talk to her about anything, not just school. Without this program I don’t think I would of come so close to reaching my goals.”

Goals for the next five years:
“I see myself having a Master’s in Licensed Clinical Social Work, helping families overcome their own challenges and [bettering] themselves. I also want to be able to provide for my family without government assistance and to move into a place that I can call home for my own family.”
In recommending Jasmine Bowman for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Tiffanie Panella writes, “Jasmine is a conscientious and dedicated student who continues to progress in her program. Not only does she work at the clinical site in her Nursing program, but she is one of our very best and most reliable tutors in our CalWORKs lab.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“My commitment to becoming a RN is so strong that I have sacrificed precious quality time with my children in order to excel in my courses. I have endured countless numbers of long nights studying and have given up social gatherings with peers so that I can achieve my dream. I have struggled financially to provide for my children, only being able to provide them with necessary items such as food, clothing, and housing. Due to my rigorous and demanding nursing program, there is no room for full time employment. Consequently, luxury activities such as going to the movies and eating out are limited….I am confident my hard work and perseverance will pay off once I graduate and obtain employment, and in the process, teach my children that education is of utmost importance.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending a community college has allowed me to grow into a strong and independent woman, mother, and student. These past four years I have come across students, faculty, and professors from all different walks of life…attending such a diverse school has allowed me to encounter individuals who have taught me never to give up on my goals and dreams. Enrollment in the Nursing program has made a difference in my life by building my confidence and motivation. I have had the wonderful opportunity to collaborate with other nursing students in order to increase my nursing knowledge and skills. In addition, the variety of resources provided has allowed me to seek assistance when needed, which helped me to focus on my studies, and maintain enrollment in school.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“Despite the lack of family support I receive, I have found it from the staff of Delta College’s CalWORKs program. They are committed to providing quality service to underprivileged students and single parents like myself. Advocacy for the students is an important reason why I have been able to pursue my educational goals. Whenever I encountered a problem or challenge, I could turn to the staff for guidance, and I was confident that they would work diligently to do what was in my best interest. The CalWORKs program has been helpful in providing services such as study time and JSBS (a program that increases my reading and writing skills). They also helped me earn extra income and develop valuable job skills beneficial to my career choice. As a tutor I have been able to interact with underprivileged students and I can relate to the obstacles these students must overcome in order to achieve their goals.”

Goals for the next five years:
“After graduating…I plan to work in a facility or community clinic that provides services to low income patients, as I can relate to the frustration associated with not being able to access quality health care due to socioeconomic status…so, I can provide the utmost professional care to them; and at the same time, increase health awareness and empowerment among the underserved community. Working in a rural health care clinic or a community health center can also provide me with the opportunity to serve as an advocate for individuals who face hurdles in an intimidating, and often inaccessible health care system.”
Perla Reyes-Godina: Region VIII Winner
Irvine Valley College,
South Orange County CC District

Area of Study: Social and Behavioral Science

Expected Degree Completion: May 2014

In recommending Perla Reyes-Godina for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Fawn Tanriverdi writes, “Perla has been an exemplary student who has struggled to move herself in a positive direction after her youth spent in an unstable family and foster homes. She has been a role model to other CalWORKs single parents in our program.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“Growing up, I never really had any positive role models or positive influences in my life and didn’t have anyone to look up to. I was 16 years-old, a junior in high school, and on the verge of dropping out, when I found out I was pregnant. To make it even harder, my home wasn’t a place I could depend on having for any length of time. I ended up being abandoned by both of my parents and the father of my child; leaving me with no support system, either financially or emotionally. Although it is very difficult being a single mother, a student, and an employee, all on my own, with the right attitude and the positive guidance of wonderful people with whom I’ve been blessed, I’ve been able to come this far.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending community college is the best thing that has ever happened to me. It was here at Irvine Valley College that I embraced my strengths, accepted my weaknesses, and took action to strengthen those weaknesses. My first year in community college I had a GPA of 1.81, but I just completed my most recent semester a 4.0 grade point average. Wow! I began to see the effects community college was having on me. I developed a sense of hunger for knowledge that I have never in my life felt so excited about before. What community college was offering me wasn’t something I could just pass by because they were the tools and jewels that I needed to proceed and succeed in my goals.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“CalWORKs is not just a program, it is my family! Before meeting the people in the CalWORKs program, I had no means of support, guidance, or a family. All of the staff in the CalWORKs program, most especially Fawn Tanriverdi, has given me exceptional support and encouragement. They all have been there for me when I was on the verge of giving up, have cheered me on to remain positive and continue, but most importantly, have been amazing role models that motivate me to become more than I had ever imagined.”

Goals for the next five years:
“Fall 2012 I will transfer to CSU Fullerton, where I will study to become a probation officer. I want to guide teens [to] break through traumatic situations and help them succeed in their goals. My aspiration is to provide children from low-income communities with encouragement and positive alternatives through music, art, and other activities they may not experience elsewhere. I will be providing them with the tools they need to express themselves, facilitating their growth to become more than they have ever imagined. I have a great life ahead of me!”
Alexandra Schilling
West Valley College,
West Valley-Mission CC District

No Photo Available

Area of Study: Nursing

Expected Degree Completion: Summer 2012

In recommending Alexandria Schilling for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Marta Mora-Evans writes, “Alexandria is a great role model for any student.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“At the beginning of 2010 I was laid off and decided my time would be best spent earning a degree. Being unemployed, I survive with government assistance and financial aid. This means no vacations, no splurging, shopping the coupon deal-of-the-week to stretch the food-stamp dollar, letting the cell phone bill be late to make sure the power doesn’t get shut off, and explaining that used toys are just as good as new toys and hand-me-downs are trendy. Medi-Cal doesn’t provide dental insurance to adults, so my recurrent toothaches are left to self-remedy. It is not easy, but the sacrifices I make now will allow me to better provide for my daughter in the future.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“In this world, some are destined to succeed, while others are determined to succeed. I am determined. I was initially scared of the idea of re-learning how to “do” school. I quickly learned that my conviction in myself was all I needed to succeed in higher education. School has been a demanding and driving force in my life. My achievements came through hours of hard work and relentless dedication. With my academic studies, my processing time is slow and I need to go over information time and time again before I am its master, but the effort is well worth the outcome. I religiously meet with my professors during their office hours for extra review sessions and clarification. I am committed to doing well in my academic studies and to providing time for my family.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The program provides financial assistance in the form of book service, daycare, and transportation assistance, to name a few. Without this invaluable assistance in place, funding my education would be far more challenging and would put a further strain on the achievement of my goals. In addition to monetary assistance, the CalWORKs staff helps with counseling, and educational planning to ensure my goals are on track, and executed in the most efficient manner.”

Goals for the next five years:
“Graduate from CSU, transfer to San Jose State in Fall 2012 and obtain my Bachelor’s Degree. I know I have the loyalty and endurance to excel in their nursing program and work as a Registered Nurse.”
In recommending Jonathen Segalla for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Myra Rush writes, "Jonathen is an excellent model student for the CalWORKs program, who has complied with all program requirements. He has always strived to do his best despite the barriers and obstacles he faced. Jonathen was able to maintain a GPA above a 3.0 while completing the nursing program. Jonathen has just taken the NCLEX exam and has already been hired as a full time registered nurse. Johnathen is an outstanding example of how the CalWORKs program can successfully lead to self-sufficiency."

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:
"There have been many challenges over the past four years that my family and I have had to overcome in order for me to finish the nursing program. I, with the motivation offered to me from my wife, left the family business in search of higher education. Leaving the family business was particularly difficult for me because I enjoyed working with my family and a couple of them thought I was betraying the family by leaving. I also had to overcome the financial strain of providing for my wife and daughter as I engaged in full time learning. I went to school at Riverside Community College and completed the prerequisite for the Registered Nursing program. I had to be put on a wait list for over a year before I was accepted into the "MJC AND" program. I found out one week before the semester started that I was accepted. In that week, I had to find and secure a place to live, move my family to Modesto from Southern California, pass a background check, obtain several immunizations, and be CPR certified. I barely completed those tasks. By the grace of God, I graduated December 16, 2011."

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life:
"Attending MJC opened my eyes to a new way of learning and new sense of accomplishment. It is extremely cost effective learning. I would not have been able to attend a university. Not only is MJC less expensive, but their nursing program has a higher pass rate on the state boards than many of the expensive universities. I firmly believe that I did not restrict my education by going to MJC but rather enhanced my education."

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
"The CalWORKs program truly enabled me to focus purely on my studies. It enabled me to not have to stress so much on providing for my family the necessities of life, because the program helped me keep a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs, and food on the table. I owe a tremendous debt to the CalWORKs program. Thank you so much."

Goals for the next five years:
"My plans for the next five years are to grow in my nursing profession by continuing my education and earning a BSN. I plan to have a couple more kids, and give back to the community by contributing to scholarships for nursing students like me. My plan is to pay it forward."
In recommending Lauran Barry for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Georgie O’Keefe-Schweriing writes, “Lauran went from being pregnant and homeless to being a working mom of two with an cumulative GPA of 3.9.”

On the barriers or challenges faced:
“The most difficult and yet rewarding challenge I have had in my life is that of raising my two young daughters as a single parent. It was in my decision to do my best to provide a good life for them that I met with some of the biggest obstacles. The discovery that I was pregnant with my first child changed my whole world and turned it upside down. At the time I was a teenage high school drop-out who was homeless. The fact that I was no longer only responsible for my life, but also for the life of a child, gripped me with fear. I made a decision to put my child first, before myself. It was in being a single parent and having the desire to not only accomplish my goals, but also be able to provide a better life for my children that I decided to get my G.E.D and enroll in college. Yet, even though the rewards of getting a college degree were promising, the many fears and anxieties that came with having to go back to school were daunting. Although fear does creep back once in a while, instead of being fearful of the unknown future, I am now excited for it.”

On how attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Attending a community college has opened new doorways in my life that led to many amazing experiences and discoveries with the promise of more to come. It has also provided me with a new sense of purpose and direction in trying to provide a better life for my children and family. I have learned so much not only in each of my classes, but also about myself and about life.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
“The CalWORKs program has made available resources that have helped arm me to face the seemingly overwhelming challenges of being a single parent while attending school.”

Goals for the next five years:
“I plan to finish my BS in psychology at UC Davis and also to go for my Master’s and become a Physicians Assistant.”
In recommending Timberly Mason for recognition in the Portraits of Success 2012, CalWORKs Director Georgie O'keefe-Schwering writes, “Timberly has turned her life around. She is a dedicated mother, student, and employee. She also has a 3.72 cumulative grade point average.”

On The Barriers Or Challenges Faced:
“In my early years, my father was abusive to my mother and I always worried something would happen to her. She remarried to a civilian contractor to the Navy and we moved many times during my primary and secondary education. I started ditching school as a freshman and a few months later I found out I was pregnant. I lost confidence in my ability to learn. The father wanted nothing to do with me and denied his [paternity]; the judgment of my peers made it unbearable to stay in school, so I dropped out. I met someone new and got married but it didn’t work out. I ended up alone again, and addicted to methamphetamines. I left my daughter in the care of my mother for my habit. During the next seven years my addiction took me places a person should never go, jail, and prison, where I earned my GED. When I found out I was pregnant, I saw the opportunity to break from the addiction that plagued my life. Upon getting clean I signed up for the CalWORKs program in order to receive financial support during my pregnancy. Once I signed up with CalWORKs, I gained a minimum wage job but knew it wouldn’t be enough to support us so I signed up at Yuba College. The statistics were against me and I think one of the biggest challenges I have faced since enrolling in college has been that same old self-doubt.”

On How attending a community college made a difference in your life:
“Huge! Here at Yuba College I found the sense of ability and self-worth that I carry with me today. I was referred by my peers and CalWORKs counselor to enroll in the EOP&S and CARE programs; they helped to soothe the worries I had and always had time to talk when I felt overwhelmed. The peer support was encouraging...[as] they were going through similar situations. The more I spoke with [them], the less I felt alone. The instructors were interested in me. They were understanding, kind, and offered me the time and the tools to make me successful. Going to college has been the best thing I have ever done for myself; I have gained confidence, self-respect, and the belief that I can do anything I put my mind to.”

The Community College CalWORKs program has aided goal achievement by:
...[providing job placement]. “Working in the testing center, as a CalWORKs Work Study Student, has given me the experience, skills, and self-confidence I need to apply for jobs within my field of studies. All of the services I received from our CalWORKs program provided substantial support, but my highest praise goes to my counselor Georganna O'Keefe and her staff. She was genuinely interested in helping me but above all, she believed in me. I will always remember [the time she spent with me] and the priceless advice.”

Goals for the next five years:
“Transfer to Sacramento State or Chico State to earn my BA and MA in Social Work. I plan to bring my knowledge and experience back to the Yuba/Sutter area and give back to the community which has taught me and suffers so greatly. I want to be a part of the change that needs to take [place] in our community, and will devote my heart and soul to it.”
Honorable Mentions

Cerritos CC District

Cerritos College, Karina Guzman

Area of Study: Nursing

“The CalWORKs Counselors helped me to develop a plan of courses I needed to take in order to gain acceptance into the nursing program...I am both thrilled and honored to be the first person in my family to graduate from college!”

Chabot—Las Positas CC District

Las Positas College, Gretchen Torres

Area of Study: Molecular and Cell Biology

“...After her first semester at Las Positas, Gretchen earned a 3.45 GPA and secured several internship opportunities. She volunteers 20-hours per week working in a variety of settings caring for animals. These experiences will undoubtedly open doors for her future career as a veterinarian. I am amazed by Gretchen’s ability to balance school, work, and raising her daughter—all with grace.”

Chaffey CC District

Chaffey Community College, Claudia Colmenares

Area of Study: Elementary Teaching / Liberal Studies

“I can truly say that with the help and support of CalWORKs I was able to reach my educational goals. They helped me choose my courses, find a job on campus, and also provided me with letters of recommendation.”

Coast CC District

Golden West College, Roxana Covarrubias

Area of Study: Liberal Studies: Emphasis in Social and Behavioral Science

“Roxana has been a diligent student receiving a 3.20 GPA and will transfer in the fall to Cal State University, Fullerton. She has applied herself in school, is a pleasure to work with, and is one of our top students.”
Attending a community college has definitely improved my English communication skills. When I first came to this country from Viet Nam, my English was limited...and I had a terrible time trying to communicate....Now, I feel more confident when speaking and I am able to understand my professors when they lecture...and feel that I can achieve my educational and career goals and become self sufficient.

CalWORKs has made it financially possible for me to succeed by providing funds in transportation, books, and materials that would have been detrimental to my success as a college student. In addition, I have received counseling and guidance that has kept me on the academic pathway I needed to be successfully prepared for transferring to a university in a timely manner.

While attending Long Beach City College I have been on the Dean's list with honors for two years now, and I have had a 4.0 GPA. I never dreamed I would be able to excel as much as I have. ..Long Beach City College and the CalWORKs program has made it possible for me to continue to further my education, and has helped me so much with everything from childcare to employment.

The CalWORKs Program has helped me and my family tremendously without their help with child care assistances, books/supplies/materials for school, and job training and placements I would not be able to come this far in my life to support and to provide for my children on my own...Please, do continue this program to help students like me,...this does makes a difference in our lives and the peoples who...depend on [us].
Honorable Mentions

Long Beach CC District
Long Beach City College, Sherrie Pollard
Area of Study: Psychology
“...my biggest dream is to be able to return all of the “favors” that have been bestowed onto me, and give back to the organizations that have helped me remain in school. Without financial aid and “Mr. Perkins,” I don’t think I could have made it this far!”

Long Beach CC District
Long Beach City College, Yesenia Portillo
Area of Study: Registered Nurse
“CalWORKs has been of great help for me not only for the financial support, but also for the opportunity to have a great counselor by my side to guide me and give advice towards my success in education. Consequently, with this type of help, I am...able to concentrate fully in my studies and not worry [as] much about my financial situation.”

Los Angeles CC District
Los Angeles City College, Shahannas Begum
Area of Study: AA Child Development
“[I plan to] transfer to a...university and complete my BA.”

Los Angeles CC District
Los Angeles City College, Mohammad Bhuiyan
Area of Study: AA Computer Technology
Attending a community college CalWORKs program has help by giving me “confidence...I feel that I am better prepared for [a] job.”

Los Angeles CC District
Los Angeles City College, Sarah Mitchell
Area of Study: Accounting
“Attending a community college has made a difference...I am [now] able to set an example for my daughter and to hopefully break the cycle of poverty. I sacrifice now, hoping that she will have a better life. It has also increased my confidence in my abilities to be successful in school as well as in life.”
Honorable Mentions

Los Angeles CC District
Los Angeles City College, Emily Raygosa
Area of Study: Medical Record Clerk
Attending a community college has made a difference in my life. I am “able to ask for help in anything, and...the resources [provided] have made it easier for me in my busy schedule.”

Los Angeles CC District
Los Angeles City College, Nigora Tuyunbaeva
Area of Study: Finance and Banking
“I have decided to transfer from LA City College to USC and pursue a BS in Accounting...I also plan to minor in International Relations...As a native of Uzbekistan, a country with diverse cultures and traditions, I speak three languages fluently in addition to English: Uzbek, Tajik, and Russian. I believe that my language proficiency and diverse background will serve me as useful tools in combing knowledge of accounting with a study of international relations.”

Los Angeles CC District
Los Angeles City College, Carolynn Warner
Area of Study: Criminal Justice
“My education plan was perfect for me, a road map with the right direction and stops along the way to my final destination, graduation and transfer. The CalWORKs department is essential for someone like me to be successful in college life.”

Los Angeles CC District
Los Angeles Mission College, Monica Campos
Area of Study: Early Childhood Special Education
“A community college represents not only an educational institution, it becomes a second home. You spend most of the day in classes, making assignments, learning to become a better member of your society. It is the place where you create a sense of belonging, where the values of respect and collaborative work are enhanced day by day. Mission College is not only the building, it is the faculty, the administrators and the student that make a difference for the community when they give back. It is a bout values and culture. Here I feel empowered and motivated. I have a voice that is being heard, and most important, I am in the process of becoming a better citizen for my country all thanks to the power of EDUCATION.”
Honorable Mentions

Los Angeles CC District
Los Angeles Mission College, Azucena Edith Martinez
Area of Study: Preschool Teacher
“For me attending college has changed my self-esteem and has taught me that goals can be achieved. The college has given me and my children the fighting chance to become productive citizens.”

Los Angeles CC District
Pierce College, Victoria Olvera
Area of Study: Nursing
“She has lived the experiences of so many of our state’s CalWORKs students: immigrants, domestic violence survivors, English-language learners, high school drop outs. Her challenges have been daunting, yet she took charge of her life to keep her children safe, pursue her educational dream, and support her family. In spite of life experiences which might have deterred another, she remains positive, appreciative, and determined to reach her goal of becoming a registered nurse.”

Los Rios CC District
American River College, Amanda Moore
Area of Study: Political Science
“...Despite the many demands on her time, Ms. Moore gives her all to her family life, education, and work. She is a model for our program and we are thrilled with her many successes.”

Ohlone CC District
Ohlone College, Erika Tarkington
Area of Study: Nursing
“The CalWORKs Program here at Ohlone is awesome. The coordinator, Shawna Lujan, has been a great recourse person as well as a strong bridge in the gap in communication with my worker. Shawna keeps each of us on time and on track with Attendance Reports, counselor contacts, requirements for maintaining your place in CalWORKs program and so much more. Because of CalWORKs, I have been able to attend school again. It has been a GREAT help to me.”
Honorable Mentions

Rio Hondo CC District
Rio Hondo College, Irma Castellanos
Area of Study: Social Behavior and Self-Development / Child Development

“One of my challenges was to reach college level courses...My assessment scores were very low ...English was very difficult for me putting together my ideas and how to write an organized paper...Reading was also hard for me because my reading level was poor in understanding and some vocabulary was new to me. As far as the math, word problems were hard to understand, once again due to my poor reading skills and habits...Although, I started from the bottom, now I can say I am very successful...”

San Bernardino CC District
San Bernardino Valley College, Elizabeth Bravo
Area of Study: Nutrition

“The community college CalWORKs program has ben such a blessing in my life...their words of encouragement gave me more endurance for this race...[they] stepped in and blessed me...[with] book loans, [school] supplies, work, counseling, and guidance on how to achieve my goals [and] wonderful words of encouragement! CalWORKs has helped me to meet my goals in such an infinite way.”

San Bernardino CC District
San Bernardino Valley College, Andrea Mahlstedt
Area of Study: Culinary Arts

“...I want to have my own catering and baking business in the next 5 years. I want t show my kids and others ...that they can do anything they put their mind to. I just want to give back all the help and influence that Valley College has given me.”

San Joaquin Delta CC District
Delta College, Andrea Ypon Flores
Area of Study: Psychiatric Technician

“... I could not have accomplished my goal with out CalWORKs program at Delta. Their support has been invaluable. Their encouragement, resources, supplies, and academic advising have been my savior. They make sure students are on the right path, meet with counselors, and provide great resources.”
Honorable Mentions

San Joaquin Delta C.C. District
San Joaquin Delta College, Brandy Howard
Area of Study: Radiologic Technology

“Community college has made a huge difference in my life. I have gained an immense amount of confidence in myself and my abilities. It has helped me change the path of my life and the life of my son. I’m truly grateful for the experience. Last but not least, it has also [encouraged] me to further pursue higher education.”

South Orange County C.C. District
Saddle Back College, Catherine Aguilar
Area of Study: English

“Miss Aguilar is a hardworking, dedicated student, and is highly motivated to achieve her goal of becoming a lawyer. She has been accepted to Cal State Fullerton and will attend in Fall of 2012. She has a 3.3 GPA, and is an Honor’s student.”

South Orange County C.C. District
Saddle Back College, Alexis Petrovich
Area of Study: Psychology

“I honestly believe that I would not have been able to accomplish all that I have without the help of the CalWORKs Program at Saddleback College…[They] were by my side, step by step. Anything I needed, they were there for me. I always felt confident that I was on the right path, taking the right classes, setting myself up for a successful transfer. My success was paramount to them, and without their support, I would not have made it this far. My gratitude is immeasurable.”

Yuba C.C. District
Woodland Community College, Angela Gonzales
Area of Study: Accounting—Business Administration

“Community college was a great start for me because it has made me ready for a state University…I am more confident that when I set a goal I could accomplish it in a timely manner…I plan on moving forward with my education at California State University, Sacramento…[to earn a] my B.A in Accounting…After that I want to move on in the next chapter in my life and become a hard working, successful, professional mother.”
CalWORKs Association

Susan Sweeney
President

Fawn Tanriverdi
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Georganna O’Keefe-Schwering
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Thank You.