



IMPACT PROFILE: ERIN CHAVEZ



FINDING A LIFELONG CAREER THROUGH ACCELERATING OPPORTUNITY

In May 2014, Erin Chavez was a single mother trying to decide what kind of career she wanted to pursue, and what that would take in terms of education and experience. She attended a student orientation at Ashland Community and Technical College in Ashland, KY, and quickly enrolled in courses for a certification in Healthcare Foundations through the college's Accelerating Opportunity program. While unsure of what specific career to pursue, Erin always knew she wanted to work in a field where she could be around people while cultivating her interest in the sciences.

From the first day of her Healthcare Foundations course, Erin felt that she had found her calling. She spent the next two and a half months fully immersed in the course material, and upon completion decided to continue her studies, with the goal of attaining a Registered Nurse (RN) degree.

"I had my daughter and I knew that I needed to pursue my education not only for myself, but for her as well," says Erin. "I want to be able to give her the world. I have always had a passion for helping people, and from the moment I

took my first Healthcare Foundations course through Accelerating Opportunity, I immediately knew that nursing was the perfect lifelong career choice for me."

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While continuing to work to support her daughter, Erin received her accreditation in Healthcare Foundations in August 2014, and immediately enrolled in subsequent courses to apply toward her RN degree. During her enrollment in the Healthcare Foundations course, Erin had the opportunity to experience two full days of hands-on nursing clinicals, and also become certified in CPR.

Unlike many introductory healthcare courses, the course through Ashland Community and Technical College focused on student engagement and real-world experience, with the goal of encouraging students to move forward with further coursework.

The Accelerating Opportunity coordinator at her college, Chrisha Spears, has become a close mentor and friend to Erin. To this day, she continues to check in on Erin's academic progress and has served as a career coach in preparing her for the job search. Through Chrisha's personal investment in Erin's future goals, Erin has found a confidante and mentor.

Erin is very much involved in the Accelerating Opportunity program at her college, where she serves as a peer advisor to incoming students and seizes any opportunity to share her story and speak at new student orientations.

With two more semesters to go before receiving her RN degree, Erin is working full time as a tour guide at Ashland Community and Technical College while also taking two summer courses. She is on track to graduate with her degree in May 2016. Because of the connections she has formed through Accelerating Opportunity, she

will have the chance this year to shadow nurses at Our Lady of Bellefonte Hospital—her top pick for employment upon graduating. Erin’s success has influenced her younger brother, who will begin his own journey through Accelerating Opportunity this fall.

“Chrisha Spears, my Accelerating Opportunity coordinator, has become a friend and personal cheerleader. Without her and the chance to be a part of this initiative, I don’t know where I would be. The hands-on experience that I received in the Healthcare Foundations course is what led me to make my career choice,” Erin says. “Every piece of paper I received in that class, I have saved and reviewed over and over again. The course was invaluable and got me on my career path.”

Accelerating Opportunity increases the number of adults with low basic skills who enter postsecondary education and quickly earn credentials that lead to high-demand, living-wage jobs. The national initiative integrates Adult Basic Education with career and technical education and comprehensive support services into clear pathways that promote student success and meet the needs of local employers.

Jobs for the Future works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today’s economy. Across the country, we work to improve the pathways leading from high school to college to family-supporting careers. Our work aligns education and training to ensure that employers have access to a skilled workforce.



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