

## WALMART GRANT HELPS SINGLE MOM (AND IRAQI VET) GET NEW JOB – AND A MUCH BRIGHTER FUTURE!

A year ago, Ashley Stocks didn't think her future looked very bright. The Iraqi War veteran and single mother of a 3-year-old son was working a job she didn't like, and most days found herself wondering how she was going to make it.

"I was barely making enough money to provide for my family and that's when I knew I had to make a huge change in my life and my career," she said.



Ashley Stocks

AACC is one of 12 community colleges in the nation selected to participate in the \$3.5 million grant from the Walmart Foundation to the League for Innovation in the Community College. In addition to providing free tuition for casino dealer training, those accepted into the program also receive academic and job search support.

One day when Stocks was at Anne Arundel Community College, she learned about the Walmart Brighter Futures Project 2.0 grant – and that's when her situation began to change for the better.

*"Something said 'Go for it! What's the worst that could happen'? So I applied and took that leap of faith," she said.*

After graduating from high school, Stocks had gone to college for a year on a soccer scholarship. When an injury ended her soccer career, she was left with figuring out how to pay for college. She decided to join the U.S. Army as a means to further her education, and she spent the next eight years, including a dangerous tour in Iraq working with vehicles from 2009-10.

"It's a very dangerous thing because you have vehicles coming in and you don't know if there's a bomb strapped to it. You don't know if that person wants to blow you up or themselves up, so every day it's a constant praying and hoping that you make it through the day."

***Watch more of Ashley's story [here](#).***

While it was tough to be away from her toddler during the nights when the training took place, Stocks says she kept her eye on knowing she was on her way to building a more promising future. From sharpening her math skills to the camaraderie she continues to enjoy with those in her cohort, she found the experience to be even better than she imagined.

"I met a group of people who I now call my family, and that's how it will remain forever," she said.



Of the 450 who have gone through the program so far, 175 have found jobs, including Stocks.

"After I completed the school, I took my audition the following week and passed! After that, I had an interview a week later and guess what? I was hired!" Stocks is now happily employed as a casino dealer for [Maryland Live! Casino](#).

"I don't know what or where I would be without that Walmart grant because they made a way for me, and for that, I will forever be truly grateful. Walmart and AACC opened a door I never knew existed and now I have a career and skill which I love and will never lose."

Learn more about the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project at AACC [here](#), or click [here](#) to find out more about AACC's Dealer School.