

## Program Summary: Anne Arundel Community College

The mission of Anne Arundel Community College's (AACC) Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project is to assist low-skilled, low-income individuals seeking job training that prepares students for a high-demand, middle-income job with a defined career pathway. The project specifically provides accelerated casino dealer training combined with contextualized adult basic skills curriculum and wrap-around student support services to increase student retention and success. This training is approved for Veterans Administration (VA) funding opportunities. As a new industry to the State of Maryland, casinos offer significant job opportunities. Five casinos have opened to date and another international casino company is coming in the summer of 2016. Additional casino job opportunities exist in nearby states such as West Virginia, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Gaming control Board has approved the AACC dealer training certificates as meeting curriculum standards required for dealer licensing in that state. This allows students to immediately seek employment as casino dealers rather than needing to pursue additional certifications.

The casino dealer training program is offered Monday through Friday, for 11 weeks, at the new fully-outfitted casino labs at the Arundel Mills campus. Students can earn transcripted AACC continuing education certificates in Casino Blackjack Dealer, Casino Carnival Games Dealer, and Casino Mini Baccarat Dealer, as well as the American Hotel and Lodging Association's Guest Services Gold certification, a nationally-recognized customer service certification. Students have the opportunity to earn digital badges in Blackjack, Carnival Games, and Mini Baccarat to document their skill attainment. These digital badges are a motivating reward system that provides a visual image for each new skill or achievement and fosters increased student persistence and completion.

A year ago, Ashley Stocks didn't think her future looked very bright. The Iraqi War veteran and single mother was working a minimum-wage job, barely making enough money to survive. When Ashley learned about the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project, she said, "I took a leap of faith". Though it was tough to be away from her toddler, Stocks says she kept her eye on a more promising future. From sharpening her math skills to the camaraderie she continues to enjoy with those in her training group, 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. "After I completed the school, I took my audition the following week and passed. I had an interview the next week and guess what? I was hired!" Ashley is now happily employed as a casino dealer at the Maryland Live! Casino. "I don't know what or where I would be without the Walmart grant because they made a way for me, and for that, I will forever be truly grateful," Stocks stated. "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."

Another Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 student, Lillie Thomas, echoes Ashley's remarks,

The Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project was the catalyst that started my new career in the casino as a table games dealer. I am very thankful for this program. It put me on track to a dream career. Now that I have achieved my goal to become a dealer, I'm working on moving up the ladder.