

## Program Summary: Santa Fe College

The Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project has given the Santa Fe (SF) College Adult Education Program the opportunity to help low-income individuals to complete certificate and industry credential programs, which lead to middle-skill jobs and further educational training. Many of these participants are concurrently enrolled in GED, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), or college readiness classes. Concurrent enrollment increases student retention and maintains student motivation. The students are no longer waiting to pass the GED or improve their English skills to begin the next phase of their lives. They are working toward their long and short term goals simultaneously. Some of these students have gone on to further educational training, while others have gone directly to work following the completion of their chosen certification program.

Students in the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project not only participate in educational and certification training, they are provided tools and supports for success when they complete the program. Classes and workshops are given in financial management; typing and computer skills; resume' writing, interviewing, and job seeking; and professionalism and workplace ethics. Additionally, partnerships between SF College and community support agencies provide resources to help students eliminate barriers to program completion and success. Individuals in low-income situations have more needs than educational needs, and if those needs are not met, students cannot focus on the education that can ultimately help improve their situations. Common referrals at SF College are to the Career Resource Center, Disabilities Resource Center, Displaced Homemakers, Plus 50 Grant, Counseling Center, Student Legal Services, SF Health Center, Gainesville Harvest Food Bank, SAINT Shareware (\$1 per item thrift store), and free bus passes through students' SF IDs. Community resources include homeless services, food assistance, CareerSource of North Central Florida, Early Learning Coalition (for childcare), utility assistance, and mental and physical health services.

Many of the students who enroll in the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Program never thought such an opportunity would be possible for them. Eureka said:

I just wanted to get my GED so I could stop lying on job applications. I have three kids, and they keep asking me, 'When you get your GED, what are you going to do, Mommy?' So of course, like any good parent I answered, 'I'm going to go to college.' I was telling them the story that they needed to hear, but I didn't believe it. Then a friend told me about the Walmart Brighter Futures Program, and it was on from there. I got my CPR certification and then my Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certificate; now I'm working as a CNA and enrolled in college classes, and I'm on my way. I'm getting my A.A. in Health Sciences so I can go into any health care program I chose.

Barbara echoes Eureka's sentiment:

I dropped out of school at the beginning of my 10<sup>th</sup> grade year in 1978, and I started doing life. I always had a self-esteem issue when it came to my lack of education. Now I can actually see myself going to college and becoming a college graduate. In the summer I will be getting my GED, and then I will be enrolling in classes in SF College's Business department.

While opening doors to previously undreamed of educational possibilities has been a major accomplishment of the Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project at SF College, much of our work has been

focused on helping students overcome barriers to program completion, obtaining job readiness skills, and assisting in job placement and follow-up.

The SF College Adult Education Program works with GED students, College Readiness students, Adults with Disabilities Program students, and ESOL students. College Readiness students have a high school diploma but would like to improve their academic skills before starting college classes, as many have been out of school for many years. Displaced workers and displaced homemakers make up a large part of this population. The Adults with Disabilities Program offers educational and job readiness opportunities for students with cognitive and developmental disabilities. The Walmart Brighter Futures 2.0 Project attempts to provide opportunities for students within each of these categories.

Jose came to America from Mexico many years ago but had always been denied the chance at an education:

I came to SF College for the ESOL class and then moved into the GED classes. In my hometown in Mexico, I just finished elementary school. I had to go to work, and I didn't have an opportunity for education. Through the Walmart Brighter Futures Project, I got a job with an electric company in town. I plan to do the Electrical Apprenticeship Program at SF; I will be working as an electrician in the day and going to school at night!

Jose is now in a much more stable position, and he can continue school and support his family simultaneously in an "earn while you learn" situation. Additionally, he will receive a raise after a certain amount of hours of schooling and will be a Journeyman Electrician at the end of his program.