

## How Job Corps Changed My Life

by **Jessica Lola Moomey**, Sacramento Job Corps Center student  
**1<sup>st</sup> Place** National Winner, JACS Annual National Essay Contest

Hello, my name is Jessica Moomey. I am nineteen years old and I entered the Sacramento Corps Center on September 9, 2002. I have been at Job Corps for one year and two months. I came to the Job Corps Center because I was exiting the fostercare system after being in it for seventeen years of my life. I came to Job Corps after being homeless, to start a better life for myself. Also considering that I had no education and that without education I would get nowhere in my life, I had to make a decision to enter Job Corps. I said to myself, from day one when I learned I wasn't living with my biological family, I will never turn out to be like mother.

My biological Mother is a drug addict, and my father is a gang member. I promised myself that I would make a better life for myself. I also chose to not have kids until I am ready to take on the responsibility for them. I want to be able to give them the things that I did not have while growing up, and that is a steady, loving, and financially stable environment. I would not want them to be in the fostercare system. While in foster care, I moved from one home to another. Growing up in foster care was really hard for me, because I didn't understand why I was in the system. While being in the system, I learned how to get by, but I never really knew how to take care of myself. Living with some of the families was a struggle for me. I felt like I was an outsider, and some of the families didn't treat me as if I was a part of their family.

Job Corps has changed my life in so many ways. Job Corps has helped me to become more independent. I look at life now differently. It has helped me to understand the importance and precious values in life, that a lot of us take for granted everyday. I have met a lot of positive role models, and have found some new friends that are on the same path as I am. I try on a daily basis to stay positive and focused. Job Corps has helped me to do that. I abide by the rules that Job Corps has. They have implemented Core Values and I believe it is an effective tool to be successful. It has helped me to become more professional when dealing with problems and or concerns.

Job Corps has helped me mature into a young woman who respects herself and has extremely high standards for herself today, and in the future. I have grown so much and understand a lot more now, as a young adult.

While in Job Corps, I have accomplished so much. I received my High School diploma from the Guajome Park Academy, and have also completed my trade here at Job Corps, which was Business Technology. While living in the dorms, I became a phase three and a role model to my peers. I was also President of my dorm, Lessen. I am a leader on center and take on a lot of responsibilities. I am currently the center Treasurer, involved in the Student Government Association, and was previously Secretary of the Welcoming Committee. I have received an award for female resident, most improved, leadership training, and a certificate from my linkage from the California State Board of Prison Terms.

I have had the pleasure to play for a year and two months on the girl's basketball team, for Sacramento Job Corps. It has taught me how to interact with other individuals positively. I also know what it means to be a team player.

I also have more adult responsibilities. I am a full time college student at Cosumnes River College. Job Corps has given me the ability to look forward in life. I am very thankful for a lot of wonderful people that I have come across while living here. I have been influenced by other trainees and staff to do all I can and the best I can. Job Corps is a safe and positive environment. I know that if I did not make the decision to come here, I would have not accomplished everything that I have so far. I believe this program is beneficial to everybody who is serious in changing his or her lives. It has definitely changed mine.

I know that because of all Job Corps has done for me, I can walk with my head high. I am proud to be a success story, and be able to say that I had Job Corps behind me. There are so many people that are proud of me. I am also proud of myself. I have learned to take one step at a time. In time, anybody can achieve what he or she put his or her mind to. I made the promise to succeed, and honestly feel like I am on the right track. Job Corps has given me a second chance to make something of myself. I understand not everybody is perfect, and Job Corps allows us to be human and make mistakes. The value I have learned in life is to learn from those mistakes and not repeat them. This has been one of the best decisions in my life. I would recommend Job Corps to anyone. ■

## How Job Corps Changed My Life

by **Lakeshia Brooks**, New Orleans Job Corps Center student  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place National Winner, JACS Annual National Essay Contest

*When you think about time, what goes through your mind?*

*It's precious, it's valuable. Or, is that just another line?*

*I once was confused, in both my heart and mind,*

*Denied a chance to fulfill my goals of all kind.*

*I had dreams to accomplish, and the ability,*

*But all of my attempts seemed to lack stability.*

*To describe my failure, imagine my plight.*

*Three days to go before my big night,*

*Family making plans, taking it all in stride.*

*And then it came, and four times I tried.*

*Four times I failed, each time two points from completion.*

*But now all I have is a notice of deletion,*

*From my class, from my dreams, from my life.*

*This was my decision time, and they asked me to take it without strife.*

Those poetic words are my expression of a period of time that almost destroyed me. I looked forward to graduating from high school, but my dreams were shattered. In Louisiana, it is mandatory that all graduating seniors must pass a standardized high school exit exam. I took the exam four times and each time I failed by two points. Graduation had come and passed, and I felt that my reward for hard work was "denied time". My dreams had come to a standstill. The

desire to achieve my goals had vanished, as did my graduating class as they walked through the door to *"their"* futures.

*"Stagnant Time"* was what I continued to move in and out of, unsure of my future. I soon realized that I needed a serious change. I needed something different, structured, and dependable. That something was Job Corps! Once I enrolled, I gained the confidence and determination to never give up. It was a challenge, but I met it. There is no price to pay to attend Job Corps; however, it does cost you only one payment of sincere commitment. For your commitment, you will receive unconditional support and daily challenges to set your goals higher.

My hopes and dreams of achieving something stared me in the face. I first thought that the challenge of completing a trade and earning my high school diploma was impossible. But, my journey through the Career Preparation Period helped me to develop social and employability skills, which strengthened my confidence. This was my *"discovery time"*. I learned so much about myself and how to interact with others. I vowed to concentrate fully on completing each phase of CDSS. This was my *"determination time"*. This was a time to do whatever it takes to get everything that I needed. I no longer felt as if my time was wasted. I saw the positive difference in myself because of Job Corps. Not only did I complete my trade of Health Occupations, I also received my diploma through the New Summit High School Program conducted at New Orleans Job Corps. I was among the first to graduate from this program! It's a good feeling and I can honestly say that Job Corps has built a strong foundation in me *"right on time"*.

You see, time is what you make of it. Whether it's *"denied time"*, *"stagnant time"*, *"discovery time"*, or *"determination time"*, you will never get anything in life until the *"appointed time"*! How you spend your time now will reflect on how you value your time in the future.

I failed the exit exam four times! But, it was only when I focused and took my time that I obtained both my trade and diploma. Job Corps taught me how to find time, be on time, and make the best of my time. That is how Job Corps changed my life. ■

## How Job Corps Changed My Life

by **John Bowen**, Pittsburgh Job Corps Center student  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Place National Winner, JACS Annual National Essay Contest**

Job Corps has changed my life in many different ways. Job Corps has shown me that there is hope for every person that is willing to give their all to make something of their life. When I entered the program, I was only trying to find a way out. I was not giving the teachers a chance to help me during a time I actually needed their help the most. The teachers at the Pittsburgh Job Corps Center never gave up on trying to help me. They have given me a lot of respect, and this has resulted in me becoming a better person. Before I came to Job Corps, I ran from my problems. My teachers taught me that the best way to deal with any of my problems is not to run away from them, but to stand up and face them.

My shop teachers have disciplined and taught me the value of perseverance and striving for excellence. In disciplining me, they helped me to respect authority. In refusing to accept excuses as to why I could not do a job or task, they helped me see that perseverance is sometimes necessary to complete complex jobs. Insisting that the world does not need mediocre people, they taught me to strive for excellence in whatever I do. In short, they have taught me to do the one thing I have wanted to do my entire life and that is to operate heavy equipment. When I exit the Job Corps program, I would like to show my appreciation for everything they have taught me by personally thanking them all.

My residential advisors have also been there for me, especially when I was sick or just not feeling well. They have helped me when I needed someone to talk to about any problems. They were there for me when I was down and ready to pack my bags and go home. They have

been my parents away from home and have taught me not to give up just because times are hard or things do not go my way.

The people at the Pittsburgh Job Corps Center are not just teachers or staff but are, in my eyes, close friends who have taught me to believe in myself and to do and be the best I can, no matter what I am doing.

If I could tell people who are thinking about enrolling in the Job Corps program one thing, I would tell them that the program is what you make it. If you set yourself up to fail, then you are going to fail; but if you want to succeed, you will as long as you do your best and put forth the effort. Nothing from nothing leaves nothing – always has and always will. If a person wants something in life, then that person must be willing to give something in return. Success comes by way of effort – no effort, no success.

I came to the Pittsburgh Job Corps Center with nothing but my luggage. I lacked self-confidence, had low self-esteem, and no self-image worth mentioning. In addition, I had very few academic or social skills. However, I have no doubt that I will leave the Pittsburgh Job Corps Center with a high school diploma, certification in my trade, and the confidence that I have everything inside of me to be successful in life. I will leave knowing that what lies ahead of me is a future created with hope and shaped with promise. ■