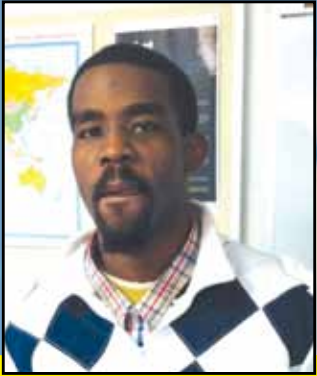


SUNSHINE SUCCESS STORIES

Showcasing Florida's Adult Education Students



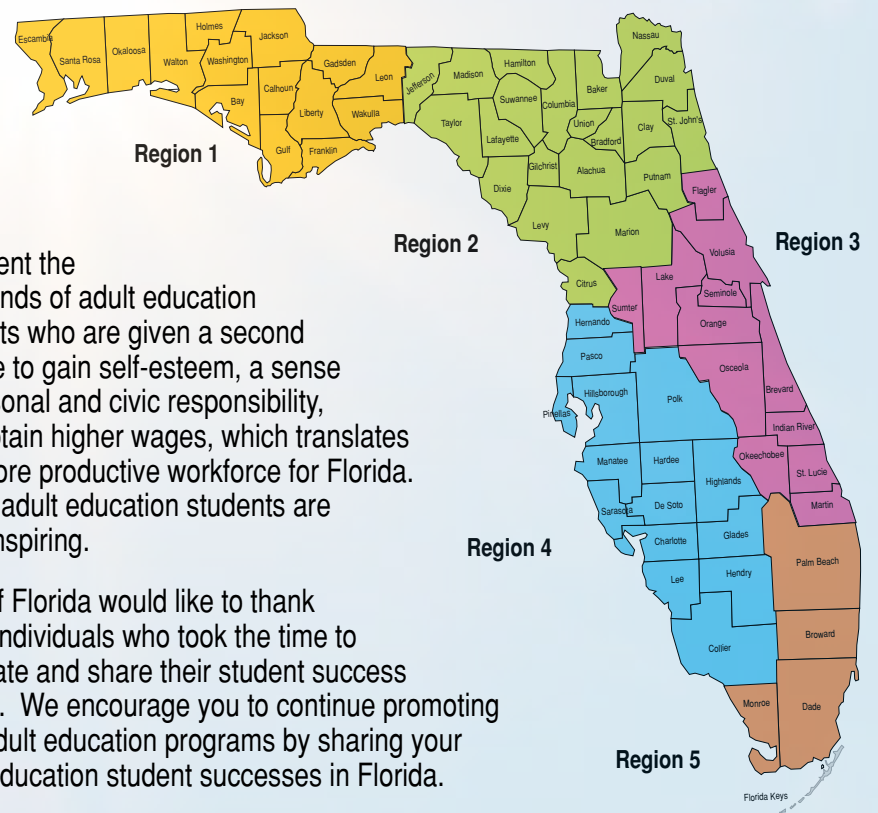
Adult education and career, technical, and workforce education serve over 300,000 students in Florida through a dual delivery system of K-12 public school districts and community/state colleges. Correctional institutions, libraries, community and faith based organizations also serve adult students. The Sunshine Success Stories identifies learners who have reached their life goals as a result of their participation in the adult education system and are now active in their communities.

The purpose of the Sunshine Success Stories is to:

- Showcase the triumphs of students who participated in adult education/workforce education programs;
- Demonstrate the results of integrated academics – adult education to career and technical programs to community/state colleges;
- Increase awareness of adult education and career and technical education statewide; and
- Illustrate the impact of these programs on an individual's and state's economic growth.

In this brochure, you will read success stories from around the state that illustrate how adult education has impacted the lives of so many. For every one story you read, there are dozens more that echo the successes of adult education students in Florida.

Thank you to the five adult education students featured in this brochure, who shared their stories of hardships, challenges and successes. They proudly



represent the thousands of adult education students who are given a second chance to gain self-esteem, a sense of personal and civic responsibility, and obtain higher wages, which translates to a more productive workforce for Florida. These adult education students are truly inspiring.

ACE of Florida would like to thank those individuals who took the time to nominate and share their student success stories. We encourage you to continue promoting your adult education programs by sharing your adult education student successes in Florida.

To read more student success stories, please visit the ACE of Florida website, www.aceofflorida.org. For more information on the Sunshine Success Stories, please contact ACE of Florida, (850) 222-2233.

ADULT EDUCATION IS...

- ✓ **A Second Chance: Willing Workers for Florida Business**
- ✓ **A Stepping Stone to Success**
- ✓ **Helping Adult Students Take the Next Step**
- ✓ **Job Attainment, Job Retention, Higher Earnings – More Productive Workforce**
- ✓ **Today's Students, Tomorrow's Workforce**



For more information contact:
ACE of Florida, Inc.
ace@aceofflorida.org
Telephone: (850) 222-2233





Region I...BRADFORD WILLIAMS

Gadsden YouthBuild Program/Tallahassee Community College and Gadsden Technical Institute, Gadsden County Public Schools

Never Ever Give Up!

Before I enrolled in the Gadsden YouthBuild program, I was not doing anything productive with my time. I was not in school, and I was not working. I applied to the Gadsden YouthBuild program and was accepted. There was a lot about academics that I did not know since I had been out of school for many years. I started out at a very low level, but I worked hard and studied harder. As a result my TABE scores improved and I was given the opportunity to take some portions of the GED exam. Time ran out on me. I did not receive my high school diploma before the program ended, so I enrolled at Gadsden Technical Institute to continue working toward getting my high school diploma.

In the meantime, I had begun volunteering at Gadsden YouthBuild because I missed the program so much. I was dedicating a few hours a day of my time to help encourage students and help out wherever I could. I was able to encourage them to continue working toward their goals, and help maintain the facilities. As a result, I was offered a job as a Vocational Staff Assistant and I was now getting paid for my services.

Finally, I did it! I passed the GED exam and received my high school diploma. If it had not been for the Gadsden YouthBuild program, I don't know if or when I would have gotten my high school diploma. As a result of the Gadsden YouthBuild program, I have now turned my life completely around. Instead of being a high school dropout who did nothing productive all day, I am a high school graduate who is working part time. I am very proud of the person that I have become, thanks again to the Gadsden YouthBuild program.



Region II...BRENDA ACEVEDO

Columbia County Career and Adult Education, Columbia County Public Schools

I know from my personal experience with adult education and family literacy that academic support is not just the donation of time and resources, but the creation of a stepping stone in a person's path towards success.

Shortly after arriving to the U.S., I got married at a very young age and with that I abandoned my dreams of obtaining an education. Four years later when my daughter began pre-school, I found myself thinking about the necessity of being equipped to help my children succeed academically. With the level of education I had, the increasing necessity of parent involvement, and the background I came from, it was very difficult to envision my children excelling academically and in all areas of their life.

In April of 2008, I was able to return to school with the help of the Even Start Family Literacy Program. The program provided daycare services for my son and guided me through the registration process in conjunction with the Adult Education Program at the Columbia Career and Adult Education Program (CCAEP). They prepared me academically to be able to pass the GED test, but most importantly, they helped me believe in myself. In June of that same year I took and passed my GED. Passing the GED in English is one of my greatest achievements, when Spanish is my native language.

In the Fall of 2009, I started college and have been attending for the past three years. Currently I am one semester away from graduating with an AA in Business. My short term goal is to earn an Accounting degree and become a CPA. In the long term, I plan to continue my education by attending law school to become better equipped to prepare my children for life and to serve as a role model for other women who are in pursuit of their dreams.



Region III... FERNONDO WILLIAMS

Lake Technical Center, Lake County Public Schools

Put 100% into it, don't give up and don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

Fernondo dropped out of high school his sophomore year. Unfortunately, he learned about "credits" when it was too late. Like most in his situation, he has had many jobs to pay the bills. At one of his jobs as a dishwasher, Fernondo was mesmerized by the skill of the head chef. From there forward, Fernondo developed a passion for food and cooking.

In August of 2011, Fernondo enrolled at Lake Technical Center in the GED prep class with the goal of getting his high school diploma and enrolling in the Culinary Arts program. As Fernondo was studying to raise his test scores, the culinary certification was always on his mind and he would write about that goal in his essays. He was a leader in class and shared his passion of cooking with others.

Fernondo took his GED test in early June 2012 and passed. He quickly enrolled in the Commercial Foods program, and is now on to achieving his next goal of becoming a chef and earning his certification in that field.

Fernondo is one of the first in Lake Tech's pilot Adult Education "Elite Ambassador" program. In this role, he will become a long-term positive impact in the adult education program through advocacy, tutoring current students, and encouraging potential students to enroll.



Region IV... LESLIE CAMACHO

Adult Education, School District of Lee County

Adult Education is the opportunity to 're-group', to get a second chance at the life you envision for yourself.

Leslie Camacho was born in New York and moved to Florida when she was 13 years old. It was a move that proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back. Her parents had major marital problems and both used Leslie as their sounding board in order to cope with their failing marriage. Leslie's outlet was school; it was her escape from her family's problems.

Leslie thought she was doing a good job managing herself and her dysfunctional family until her parents decided they needed to save their marriage and move to south Florida. She was devastated. The family arrived to a harder life than the one they left. The culture shock was severe. For the first time her school work plummeted and she was lost.

She went from always being a straight A student to being placed in remedial classes that didn't allow her to take any extracurricular classes. She began to break down herself. She realized that high school was not going to be a part of her future life. She made the very difficult decision to drop out of high school and earn her GED.

Leslie was 16 when she entered the Adult Education Program of Lee County. She was a leader in her classes. She took advantage of the AE's partnership with the local state college and attended all the workshops that help student prepare for college. She earned her GED and immediately entered college. She has since completed her first semester at Edison State College and earned out of over 600 other competing students the award "Most Involved Student" for her dedication and leadership in the Corner Stone class.



Region V... ROBERTO MAYORGA

Hallandale Adult Community Center, School Board of Broward County

"No matter how many obstacles life puts in your path, don't get frustrated. Stay focused and you can reach your goal and become whatever you want to in life."

Roberto Mayorga grew up with his sister and his grandfather in Nicaragua. He longed for his parents who moved to the United States in 1992. They wanted to make a better life for his sister and him. He came to the U.S. six years after his parents only to find that they were living separate lives. This was very difficult for him because he visualized his family being together again. He immediately applied for residency because he feared that due to the result of the war in Nicaragua in 1979, he would be sent back to his country. He was 14-years-old. He went to enroll in high school, but because he didn't speak any English, the counselor put him in middle school. He had a hard time adjusting. He struggled through 9th, 10th and 11th grade. At

that time, his mother was single and she was the only one who was working to support Roberto and his sister. So, Roberto quit school because he needed to help. He found two jobs, but later he moved to Connecticut. He took the GED there in 2002, but he had to return to Florida because of family problems so he didn't take the writing and science portions of the test. He had to work again so he put the GED on the back burner, but by 2012 he was ready to try to pass the test. His English improved immensely. He heard about Hallandale Adult Community Center and he enrolled here in February of this year. When he entered class he needed to work on his writing skills for he feared his English was not good enough. He juggled school and work for a few months. He wrote numerous essays to improve his writing ability. Finally, he scored high enough on the practice test to be recommended for the actual test. He was an excellent student. He took the test in July and when he received his results in August he was a graduate!!! All of his hard work had finally paid off.

Roberto is working as a waiter, in addition to driving a truck for a produce company and working at the Hollywood Israel Post. It is Roberto's dream to run his own company. He plans to start at Broward College and study Business Administration.