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ADULT EDUCATION
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ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS STORY

Eddie Rivera | Connecticut

Adult education gave Eddie a second chance upon reentry. Born in Puerto Rico, Eddie felt lost when his mother moved away from his drug-addicted father and moved him to Connecticut. He blamed himself for their split, and Eddie eventually dropped out of high school and began to use drugs to cope with the stress of being bullied. He was arrested multiple times, and by the age of 20, he began his first prison sentence.

It was here he had his first chance to lean into his artistic ability, and he began drawing pieces for the other inmates in exchange for food. Turning 21 in jail was his wake up moment. He completed his GED® credential while incarcerated and came out brimming with ideas for how to make something of himself. He wouldn't let this second chance pass him by.

Even with his determination, success wouldn't come easy for him. He lived in his car for a year and showered at the local gym, all while trying to save money to open an art studio. Finally, he was able to rent a one-bedroom studio—with no bathroom—and was able to begin selling his art and developing a client base. One of his client's recognized his talent and gave him a loan to open his own barbershop, and today Eddie is the proud owner of his own establishment. He continues to do murals, make music, and create pop-up art exhibits when he is not cutting hair.

Adult education gave Eddie a path for successful reentry after incarceration and filled him with possibilities. He says after his experiences with prison, "Boredom is very dangerous for the mind, so why not create?" With that mindset, Eddie dreams to help others around him to overcome. ■