

ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS STORY

Tania Lugo | Arkansas



Adult education gave Tania's another chance at a career. At 16, Tania didn't see any value in education and decided to drop out of high school and marry her 19-year-old boyfriend. Although their marriage was good, she soon began to long to make something more out of her life.

Two years later, pregnant with her second child, Tania saw an advertisement on TV for a college that could offer her a high school diploma and get her started on a career. After her child was born, she enrolled in evening classes, passed her high school equivalency exam, and received her diploma within 18 months. With this new degree in hand, she worked in the medical field for over a decade.

In September of 2016, however, disaster struck. When trying to move to another company, she discovered that her certification was invalid. "In fact, I did not have a high school diploma," she says. "The college I had attended fifteen years earlier no longer existed and was not an accredited school." Tania's husband encouraged her to go back to school and get the degree she had always wanted.

In January of 2020, Tania enrolled in the Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) Adult Education Program. Her fellow students soon became a community of accountability for her. "We each pushed ourselves to pass each test," she says. "We cried and rejoiced as each one of us would pass one test at a time. Being part of the GED® program was one of the best experiences ever! Tania passed her GED® exam in February of 2020, right before the pandemic hit.

Today, Tania works as an administrative assistant at the NWACC adult education center, and has been a full-time student at NWACC for three semesters. She plans to attend Missouri Southern State University in the fall to continue her undergraduate degree in psychology and eventually a master's degree in counseling. ■

Inspiring educators so adults succeed and communities thrive