



A Program of the Brookline Housing Authority

Next Steps Story

Written by Vanessa R (BHA Resident)

Who knew that a flyer from Brookline Next Steps would sweep me up in a whirlwind of opportunity? A friend and neighbor of mine was already working with the Director, Grace Watson, who had told her about Human Services Employment Ladder Program (H.E.L.P.) at Goodwill. That friend thought H.E.L.P. was a good fit for me, so referred me to Grace for Next Steps' Training Incentive Program (TIP) for additional support. My friend was ever so right! I signed up for H.E.L.P. and TIP right away.

Although I felt as though we were managing fairly well, I wanted to provide a higher quality life for my family. Yet, I was very apprehensive about starting over. I had left my previous childcare position for medical reasons six years ago, so I assumed it would be too difficult for me to get back into the workforce. I had an outdated resume that needed revamping, and I wanted to change my career from early child development to something more challenging for me. Although there were many times when I wanted to give up on the intensive 8-week H.E.L.P. program, I focused on my goal to provide a better future for myself and for my children. So, I completed the H.E.L.P. program in May 2014 (with the highest GPA of the group), and immediately landed a full-time job as a Direct Care Counselor at Communities for People, where I will provide guidance to at-risk adolescent girls. I am excited to have a full-time job where I am able to help teens learn life skills that they may not have. Needless to say, I found my pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Whether it's a friend, neighbor or a family member, everyone needs encouragement and support. It's up to you to use resources and opportunities to your advantage to obtain a reachable goal. The right place to do that is with Brookline Next Steps. Grace Watson, the Director, will make a plan with you and offer encouraging words of enlightenment to keep you from getting discouraged throughout your journey. Also, the TIP program offers up to \$250 in support, such as monthly MBTA bus passes, supermarket gift cards or a cash stipend upon completion of an approved program.

August 6, 2014

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of the Next Steps program application for the Brookline Community Foundation's Community Grant.

I have had the great honor of being able to utilize the Next Steps program and work with Grace Watson on my journey to getting back into the workforce after several years. My family and I are residents of Brookline Housing. We are a family of six, including me, my husband and our four children ages 18, 14, 13, and 6. I decided to use the Next Steps program because my youngest was now in school full time, so I had the ability to go back to work, since it was not necessary for me to stay at home as much anymore. Grace helped me get my resume together, so that I could go to Job Fairs, fill out applications and go on interviews. Grace was very instrumental in helping me with my journey, not only in looking for a job, but giving me many different paths to take, such as deciding what job to look for, and what I was qualified for. I also had the option to attend training programs that would prepare me for a new career. I have to say that, at the beginning, I was very nervous about returning to work. I thought the process was going to be long and tedious, but Grace was very reassuring, calming and knowledgeable and put me at ease. She was able to guide me through each step, showing me how to write and edit my resume and fill out applications. She kept me informed about upcoming Job Fairs, showed me proper etiquette during an interview and how to follow up afterwards. By the end of this process, not only did I have two job opportunities and an option to attend a training program, I also had more confidence than when I started working with Grace. The wonderful treatment I received and the quality of care that I was given are several reasons that I would, and have, recommended the Next Steps program for anyone that is looking for a job, a new career, or trying to re-enter the workforce, like I was.

The Next Steps program is a great asset to low-income families and to Brookline Housing. It gives people an opportunity to get back on their feet and to have options that they otherwise wouldn't have. I hope that Next Steps continues on to help the families in need. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Misti J

Next Steps Success Story

August 28, 2014

By the time I found Next Steps, I was ready to move forward professionally. I had been searching for a full-time professional track job for a long time. Although I graduated from the University of Massachusetts Boston in 2011, I was confused as to what direction I wanted to go in with my degree. So, I had continued working at Star Market and volunteering at the Joslin Diabetes Center longer than I had expected. Although my university's career center offered services, the high demand from current students, resulting in limited availability for alumni, turned me off from using that resource. So I tried job searching on my own for a while. I struggled to navigate through this process.

I found myself in a hole, but that is when I was referred to Next Steps. Grace Watson, the Director of Next Steps helped me out in every way possible. She assisted me in making my resume the best it could possibly be. She provided excellent assistance with writing customized cover letters for different employers, and fantastic practice interview sessions for potential employers.

Next Steps helped me to finally land a full-time job as a Paraprofessional for the Public Schools of Brookline. It warms my heart to be able to give back to my own community, and I'm excited to be on a rewarding and promising career track.

I highly recommend Next Steps Brookline to any Brookline Housing Authority resident who is in need of obtaining employment. I would gladly use Next Steps as a resource to continue advancing higher professional career goals in the future. It's great to know that Next Steps will continue to be a resource for me as I continue to plot out my career plans.

Sincerely,

Jason M
Resident of Brookline