

“I kept dreaming of going to college.”

## Christa

*Letter from a GED scholarship applicant:*

“My name is Christa and I’m 20 years old. Life is good now, but it hasn’t always been. By the time I was seven, both parents had abandoned me. Had it not been for my grandmother taking my three sisters and me in, there’s no telling where I would be. After her unexpected passing, I was 16 and completely on my own. Although I was an excellent student athlete, it couldn’t put food in my mouth or shelter over my head. I was forced to drop out of high school and work. Unlike most drop outs, I kept dreaming of going to college. I believe winning this scholarship would be the most amazing motivator for me. I’ve never been given an opportunity like this. It would be a great reassurance to know I have help and something to lean on.”

*Christa earned the GED scholarship, enrolled at Georgia Northwestern Technical College, and majored in criminal justice.*

## Steven

Although he was in his mid-30s, Steven (name changed) had never read a book. He had a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, but he wanted to improve and maybe even read a novel. Encouraged by Beth Gentile at the Gilmer Learning Center, he began with Gary Paulsen novels. After much work, he has become a voracious reader, completing 12 novels in a six-week period. He has obtained a library card and recently inquired about reading *Harry Potter*. With Beth’s encouragement, that is where he is headed next.

## Brigitte

Sixteen years ago, Brigitte came to Gainesville from France to work. She found the Adult Learning Center and a special tutor to help her with her English skills. After her employment opportunities were completed, she returned to France. Several years later, she returned to the Atlanta area. She was determined to continue with her studies and began making the hour drive to the learning center. Brigitte had tried other classes closer to home but never felt as comfortable and as cared for as she did at the Gainesville center. She attended four days a week, determined to increase her language skills enough to allow her to begin studying for the GED test. She completed her goal, obtained her GED diploma, and is now pursuing United States citizenship. She continues the long trip four days a week to work at the center and encourage other students. She tells them that if she, with her once limited language skills, can achieve her goals, anyone can. Her ultimate goal is to obtain employment in the public service field where she can give back to the community that has given so much to her.

## William

Seven and a half years ago, William was making his living on the road, driving a truck. He would be gone three weeks out of every month while his wife stayed home with their three young daughters. After his wife died in a tragic car accident, William knew he had to change careers in order to be at home with his girls. Having no high school diploma, he returned to school at Athens Technical College and obtained his GED diploma. With a \$500 postsecondary scholarship from the Athens-Clarke Literacy Council, he enrolled in the Athens Tech Electronics Fundamentals program.

## Ashley

Ashley dropped out midway through the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. After a series of service jobs offering little pay and no hope for advancement, Ashley decided it was time to take control of her future by returning to school to earn her GED diploma. “Without a high school diploma,” she said, “it became obvious to me that I would never have a chance to land a job that would provide for me and my daughter. I realized the importance of education and how quitting school would hold me back.” Working with West Georgia Technical College (WGTC) Adult Education instructors, Ashley quickly mastered subject matter and, at the suggestion of her instructor, applied for a GED Testing Scholarship provided by the Troup County CLCP. As the recipient of the 100<sup>th</sup> Troup CLCP scholarship, Ashley received her GED diploma and will pursue an Associate’s degree in Criminal Justice at WGTC. To young people thinking of quitting school and adults who wonder if it is worth the effort, Ashley says, “I am living proof that quitting school gets you nowhere and that it is never too late to further your education. Never give up. Hard work and effort will help you fulfill your dreams.”

## Devona

Devona was a 10<sup>th</sup> grade drop-out. She attempted to obtain a GED diploma but did not complete the courses. She married, had a son, and became mother to two step-children. She struggled trying to raise a family and pay bills. She realized that attaining a GED diploma had become a necessity, so she enrolled at the Catoosa County Learning Center. Her efforts resulted in her earning the Student of the Year Award complete with a \$500 scholarship, which she applied toward tuition at Georgia Northwestern Technical College. She graduated with a data management certificate. Now, she not only has a good job, but she is also more effectively taking care of her family and helping her children with homework. Encouragement and support from the CLCP chapter in Catoosa County was instrumental in helping Devona achieve her goals.

## Emily

At the age of 14, Emily was diagnosed with several rare disorders. The subsequent treatments required her to leave school. Although told she wouldn’t be able to finish high school, Emily still dreamed of receiving her diploma. She worked hard and passed the Georgia High School Graduation Test. Unfortunately, because she was unable to attend school for the required amount of days, she did not receive approval to graduate. About a year later, Martin—her friend, fellow patient, and later boyfriend—encouraged her to keep working toward a diploma by earning her GED credential. Though skeptical at first, Emily soon found that the GED program and its supportive instructors were the key to her dream. With a scholarship provided by the Decatur County CLCP, Emily took and passed the GED exam. Fifteen days before Emily received her GED diploma, Martin passed away after a long battle with cancer. In her graduation speech, Emily dedicated her achievement to Martin, honoring the support and inspiration that he had given her. “We’ve worked hard for this while facing many different obstacles,” Emily said. “And just to hear your name called out makes it all worth it.” Emily plans to attend college and become a nurse.

## John

John was an immigrant from Scotland who simply wanted to fit in. He felt he could not do so until he obtained a diploma. He earned his GED diploma while in his 70s. With the added confidence of having his diploma, John became a contributor to his community, helping senior citizens, volunteering at the local hospital, and serving AARP. “Now,” he says, “I feel like a real citizen of my country and in my community.” John was the fifth person to receive The GEDD Award and a place on the Calhoun-Gordon Council for a Literate Community GED Wall of Honor.

## Brian

After being referred to the Cobb Works Youth Assets program, Brian found the resources he needed to progress in his education, including funds to cover the cost of the GED exam. Although he met the minimum score requirements for each section, his overall score was not high enough to earn his GED diploma. The Cobb Literacy Council stepped in to develop a plan of action. The CLCP arranged for Brian to work with a volunteer. With support from many directions, Brian remained determined and earned his GED diploma. His next goal was college. After taking the COMPASS exam, Brian’s writing score was too low to be admitted to a technical college and the CLCP assisted with remediation courses. Brian took the COMPASS exam again, scoring 3 points more than he needed to be admitted and was ready to enroll at Chattahoochee Technical College where he will work towards a diploma in Medical Assisting.

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## Bill

Bill (name changed) had been on the same job at the same location for 20 years. Then, the corporation he worked for closed its local office, and Bill—who had never missed a day of work, but who had also never finished high school—was out of a job. He went on to several interviews, but the message was always the same: no high school diploma, no job. Ironically, Bill and his wife had successfully raised three children, all of whom attended college. He enrolled in the GED program at West Georgia Technical College in Haralson County, where Betty Candler directs the CLCP program LAMP (Learning Always Means Progress). When he attained his GED diploma he enrolled in the radiology program at West Georgia Tech. “Next time I saw him,” Ms. Candler said, “he had this big grin. He had been hired by the new KIA plant in West Point and was told he would probably go to Korea for training.” Once again, hard work and a well-earned GED diploma made all the difference.

## Rebecca

Rebecca, a 23-year-old single mother and a graduate of the Alliance for Literacy’s GED program, received a \$500 continuing education scholarship. The scholarship has allowed her to bridge the gap between simply obtaining her GED diploma and enrolling in Gainesville State College. She is a student in the paralegal program with dreams of qualifying for law school. As a HOPE scholar, she acknowledges that without the additional scholarship she would not have been able to afford the expenses not covered by the HOPE funds. In her application, she said, “I am very determined in becoming educated and an outstanding, honest and reliable attorney. I want to help the people of Georgia who need it most, just as HOPE and financial aid have helped me. I plan to pay it back to my community.”

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## Jorge

Jorge attended GED classes at Georgia Northwestern Technical College in Gordon County. He had a job on second shift, but still attended classes despite the difficult schedule. His determination allowed him to attain his GED diploma within one quarter, achieving a composite top 20 score for all three Georgia Northwestern Tech campuses. He recently obtained a management position with a multi-chain construction firm, an accomplishment that would never have happened had he not persevered in getting his GED diploma.

## Jenna

*Letter from a GED student:*

“It is important, in the times we are in now, and necessary to have an education. It is almost impossible to get a good job without one. I want to help support my son, and I don’t want my son to see me as a failure, and I certainly don’t want him to repeat my mistakes. I want to do this so I can be proud of myself. I need my GED diploma because I want to make something of my life. I have let down a lot of people, including myself, and it is time for me to grow up and get my life together.”

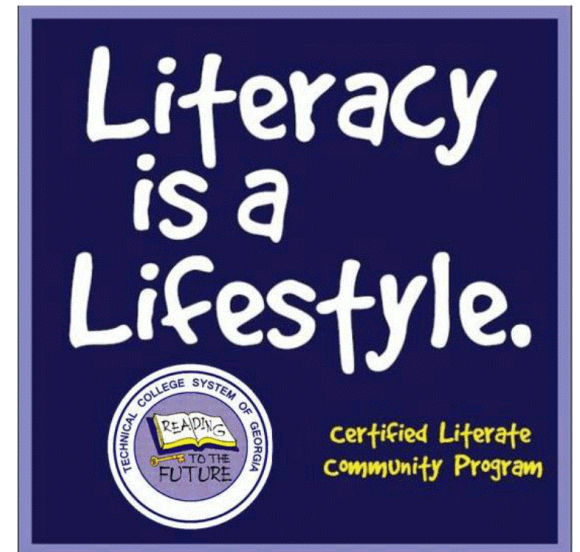
“I want to do this so I can be proud of myself.”

*Jenna went on to earn her GED diploma.*

The Cobb Literacy Council supports a GED diploma program that is held at a rehab center for drug-addicted men. One participant at the center was a man who had resumed his drinking habits. He enrolled in the GED classes, took the exam and failed by just four points. Encouraged by his close score, he refused to give up. Persevering not only through his attempts to become sober again but also dyslexia, he took the exam again, this time exceeding the minimum score by an astounding 120 points. He has returned to his GED class to encourage classmates. His teacher says students are inspired by his success and are working hard to accomplish the same.

## Silvia

Silvia (name changed) attended a GED class in a small room at the police station. The class has no more than three or four students at a time. She shared her story of why, at an advanced age, she is striving to attain her GED diploma: “I could not read or write,” she said. “I work at a hotel. Part of my job is to count out sheets and towels. My supervisor had to do it and then write the report. Then, I had a child, and when she went to school, she would bring home notes that I could not read. That’s when it changed for me. I said, ‘this has gone far enough.’ That’s why I’m here.” Today, she not only reads those notes brought home from school, but she also helps her daughter with her homework.



## CLCP “Gotcha” Moments

*Stories and letters from students in the Certified Literate Community Programs.*

Hard work and effort will help you fulfill your dreams.

*—Ashley, GED graduate*