

THE FUTURE IS HERS

A single mother finds new hope after receiving her high school diploma

By Gail Allyn Short

Following the tragic death of her son's father, Angela Byrd didn't know where to turn when she found herself on government assistance as a single mother. She wanted to improve the lives of her and her son but was unsure how to do so. She found a future through the Southern Alameda County Consortium (SACC) for Adult Education.

"A career counselor at the Hayward welfare office looked at my file and saw I didn't have a high school diploma," she recalled. "She asked me if that was something I wanted to look into because a lot of jobs would require it. That's when I learned about the adult school in Newark."

As luck would have it, Byrd and her son were living in Newark. She enrolled in Newark Adult Education almost immediately.

"It was very easy to get to, the enrollment process was simple, it was inexpensive, and the program times fit into my schedule even though I was busy," she said.

"My goal now is to get a Ph.D."
Angela Byrd, Student

Due to a series of family hardships, Byrd never received her high school diploma. Newark Adult Education made it easy for her to earn her diploma and complete a medical assistant program at the same time. After graduation, Byrd was pleasantly surprised to find there were better paying jobs available to her than just the medical



Angela Byrd wanted a better life for her and her son. Now they have one after receiving her high school diploma thanks to the Southern Alameda County Consortium for Adult Education. Photo by George E. Baker Jr.

assistant work she had planned for.

"I have a good job now," Byrd said proudly. "I was looking at medical assistant work for \$13 or \$14 an hour, and my current job in a medical setting pays twice that."

Her new job has allowed Byrd and her son to move to a metropolitan area. She describes her life since losing her partner as a "journey," but one that is now looking up. It is also not anywhere near over yet.

"I'm still going to school," she said. Byrd is currently enrolled in college courses, studying communications and computer science. "My goal now is to get a Ph.D. — that's what's at the end of the tunnel for me."

Most importantly, Byrd wants to spread the message that affordable education is out there — and goals can be reached even as you parent and work. She also believes it is possible to change your life, no matter how much it may have seemed to spiral away from you.

"I tell patients at the hospital about my experience," she said. "And I want to help other single mothers who may not know how easy this process is or how to go about starting through SACC."



Southern Alameda County Consortium for Adult Education
For more Information visit sacc-adulted.org

WHOLE-PERSON APPROACH

ADVANCE sees people as individuals and asks ‘What do you need?’

By Anne Stokes

For students, success depends on more than academic support—it lies in supporting them both in and outside the classroom. For Riley Hinkson, that support came from Meredith Crosby, transition navigator with ADVANCE.

“She’s been cheering me on the whole time, she’s been incredibly supportive and super accepting,” Hinkson says. “Having that enthusiastic support for me ... really makes it that much better.”

In 2020, Hinkson—who identifies as transgender—found themselves cut off from family and on their own. In search of a more sustainable future, they joined the California Conservation Corps, where they not only found a new job they loved, but the training and college education to make a career out of it.

As college liaison for the CCC’s Tahoe Center, Crosby helps corpsmembers like Hinkson navigate the college system with things like enrollment, financial aid options and creating academic plans. Luckily, that’s not where support ends. ADVANCE navigators can connect students with community resources for health care, mental health care, housing, food insecurity and more.



Riley Hinkson has been able to build a new life and career in forestry thanks to ADVANCE’s whole-person approach. Photo courtesy of Riley Hinkson.

“We meet clients where they’re at and we also offer wraparound services. ... It’s really looking at the individual and what they need in their lives to be successful,” Crosby explains. “Two people can have a goal, ... but how they reach that goal can be drastically different based on the individual. As a navigator, it’s my job to help guide individuals to a pathway that meets their needs.”

For Hinkson, such support included help handling the formal bureaucracy involved in legally changing their name and gender as well as emotional support during more personal trials and tribulations.

“Whether it be my personal life or academics, I’m always able to talk to her about it. She’s been an incredible sounding board for me because she has such great advice,”

Hinkson says. “My family doesn’t support me but having people who are there and who are enthusiastic about my goals and what I want to achieve in my life helps give me the motivation to keep on pushing when on some days I just want to quit.”

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Vanessa Fines, Student

From Flipping Burgers to Helping Patients: Butte-Glenn's adult education program helped jump-start one woman's career into nursing

by Krysta Scripter

It opened my eyes and made me happy, because I didn't know at first what I wanted to do," Raven Ortega, 23, says about the Butte-Glenn Adult Education Consortium. "And now I've realized I want to be a nurse and I want to work at the hospital with the babies."

Ortega, a single mother who previously worked at McDonald's, applied for the certified nurse assistant program because she had a scholarship she had to use before it expired. She chose the CNA program at Oroville Adult Education, a member of the Butte-Glenn Adult Education Consortium, for its quick start and promise of work.

"At first I didn't know what CNAs even did," Ortega says. "I always wanted to help people, but I didn't know (in what way)."

"And what's weird is I hated school, but after graduating high school and going into CNA school, I was like, 'I could do it, I can do college.'"

**Raven Ortega,
Certified Nurse Assistant and Oroville
Adult Education graduate**

Raven Ortega, Certified Nurse Assistant and Oroville Adult Education graduate

Ortega finished the 11-week program and began working at the Oroville Hospital Post Acute Center for three years before deciding to attend nursing school.

She says completing the CNA program helped her open up to the idea of attending college: "And what's weird is I hated school, but after graduating high



Raven Ortega is now a nursing assistant after completing the Butte-Glenn's CNA adult education program. Photo by Charles Finlay

school and going into CNA school, I was like, 'I could do it, I can do college.'"

and I know how to take care of people and help them."

The CNA program was also more than just bookwork—Ortega describes how daily clinical classes trained her and other students right on-site.

"We got to do hands-on...like, go in in the morning and we'd do everything that the CNAs did: showers, the bathing, the training, all that," Ortega says.

There were some challenges. Dealing with medical information and patient confidentiality were major concerns at first, but Ortega says learning how to help people was worth it. Adult education didn't just give her a job; it gave her a purpose.

"It changed me as a person," she says, "because I went from not knowing how to deal with people and not understanding it to where now I know about medical history



For more information, visit butteglennadulthood.org.

NEW HOME, NEW LANGUAGE, NO PROBLEM

English as a Second Language programs empower students to continue rising up

By Corey Rodda

Yan Chen immigrated to Fremont from Guangzhou, the sprawling capital city of Guangdong province in southeastern China. In China, she completed a bachelor's degree in business administration and spent 15 years as a technical and operational manager for an insurance company.

However, in her new home in California, Chen struggled to communicate.

"My English was very poor," she said.

So in her 40s, she went back to school – determined to grasp the intricacies of a language with intonations and an alphabet radically different from her native tongue."

It wasn't until a friend from her local church helped her enroll in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at Fremont Adult and Continuing Education that she made real progress.

The school's ESL teachers assessed Chen's current level of English proficiency and worked with her to develop a set of goals specific to her needs.

"I have built up a lot of confidence."
Yan Chen, Student

In addition to learning English, Chen was also taught how to write a resume, use an English computer and understand important documents like leases and work contracts. These are important skills necessary to any individual building a new career, but especially tricky for immigrants who don't speak English.



Yan Chen needed a new set of skills after immigrating to the U.S. She found them easily through the Southern Alameda County Consortium for Adult Education, which seeks to empower students through their adult education programs. Photo by George E. Baker Jr.

After her teachers encouraged her to look at the Southern Alameda County Consortium for Adult Education's other adult schools for possible career paths, Chen enrolled in New Haven Adult School's Residential and In-Home Care Training program where she discovered a new calling in health care.

"It is a totally new field for me," she said. "I learned about the common diseases, infections and chronic illnesses found in residential care settings. I also learned how to prevent accidents, disease and injury, and how to promote healthy lifestyles through stress management, sports, crafts and hobbies. From this class, I built a lot of medical words into my vocabulary."

This new field inspired Chen to continue studying nursing and work with the aging population, a career she is still pursuing through education.

"I want to help vulnerable people who are sick and help enhance the quality of their lives," she said.

Chen is also still taking English classes. She recently enrolled in the Advanced ESL

Grammar and Writing for College and Work class at Fremont Adult and Continuing Education.

"Right now, I can express myself easily in English," she said. "I have built up a lot of confidence to speak directly to native speakers and can read my medical textbook."

Speaking English and setting new goals has also helped Chen embrace her new and diverse home. She said that one day she wants to find a job where she can work with people from different countries and cultural backgrounds.



Southern Alameda County Consortium for Adult Education
For more Information visit sacc-adulted.org

“English is Very Important Here”: Mom keeps up with classwork with the help of a donated laptop

by Edgar Sanchez

Like many immigrants to this country, Mexico-born Maria L. Garcia has faced a range of predicaments for not knowing English – the United States’ primary language.

Upon arriving in Tulare County as a young adult, Garcia discovered that for non-English speakers, “simple things can become highly complicated,” as she put it. That includes such tasks as trying to buy items in a store.

Her frustration grew until she had enough of the language barrier.

In late 2019, the 56-year-old housewife enrolled in an English as a Second Language class at Alpaugh Junior-Senior High, near her Alpaugh home. The twice-a-week ongoing class is offered through Corcoran Adult School’s Alpaugh extension



During the pandemic, Maria L. Garcia keeps up with classwork, thanks to a Chromebook made possible by a special grant. Photo courtesy of Maria L. Garcia.

students dropped out. Only seven pupils, all women from Mexico, remain.

Recently, each received a Chromebook, made possible by a special grant. They review English lessons on the laptops while continuing to meet in-person, adhering to COVID-19 protocols.

In Mexico, Garcia completed sixth grade in a tiny community. Continuing her education would have required daily bus rides to a school 20 miles away, a commute her father deemed perilous.

“Where I lived, the school ended in sixth grade, so that’s as far as I went,” Garcia says.

In 1988, she married Rafael Garcia, a kindly man. Soon, the newlyweds immigrated to Alpaugh, where they raised four children, all now adults, at least three of whom have attended college.

To help support her family, Maria at times picked oranges, apricots and cotton. Her husband is a tractor driver and soil irrigator.

In parts of Tulare County – like the Latino-owned supermarkets where Maria shops with ease – Spanish dominates.

Visits to other establishments can be daunting. For instance, the Garcias went to a huge hardware store, seeking a showerhead and related items for their bathroom. Despite prodigious efforts, they couldn’t find what they needed – or Spanish-speaking staff. English-speaking employees tried to help. Unfortunately, the couple didn’t know the English names of the products they needed. A bilingual person eventually intervened, allowing the couple to make the purchase.

The experience showed Maria a future job opportunity, she says. “After I learn English, I would like to work in a store as a cashier or stocker.”

“Where I lived, the school ended in sixth grade, so that’s as far as I went.”

**Maria L. Garcia,
ESL Student**

program in partnership with Alpaugh Unified School District.

“English is very important here,” says Garcia, referring to the United States. “I want to be conversant in that language.”

On the first day of class, about a dozen students seemed keen to learn. Their teacher, Lauren Urmson, welcomed them. Then COVID-19 hit in early 2020. Some



For more information on Corcoran Adult School’s ESL program, visit <https://kinglake.corcoranunified.com/ESL>.

Tools of the Trade: Butte-Glenn helps train existing and future employees for Johns Manville Fiberglass

by Krysta Scriptor

In small counties, finding employees with the unique skills a company needs can be difficult. Thanks to the Butte-Glenn Adult Education Consortium, employers can meet this challenge, both in terms of ensuring their current staff is up-to-date and that new hires with the proper training are available.

Marianne Kranz, database and support coordinator and maintenance supervisor at Johns Manville Fiberglass, says Butte-Glenn has filled a crucial role for their company.

“They’ve just been very helpful,” she says. “Anything we need, they’re more than willing to put something together for us.”

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Marianne Kranz

Database and Support Coordinator and Maintenance Supervisor at Johns Manville Fiberglass

Johns Manville works with Butte-Glenn to develop specific classes for employees, including an apprenticeship course for electricians. The Consortium has also taught courses on blueprint reading, measurements and shop math, the skills needed for this roofing and insulation company.

“When you’re dealing with pretty complex pieces of equipment or buildings, those [blueprints] can get pretty detailed,” Kranz says. “And then in shop math, we found that there’s a definite deficiency.”



Adult education keeps employees at Johns Manville up-to-date being helping to train existing and future employees. Photo by Charles Finlay

Kranz says the company was surprised to learn some employees never received a real foundation of mathematics in school. “One of our guys, one of our electricians, he’s a smart guy, but he said, ‘I never did that in school. I never did shop math in school and multiplication and areas, geometry... I never got a chance to.’ So we had to help them catch up, which was pretty cool.”

Johns Manville also worked with Butte-Glenn to train office and clerical employees in skills like Excel and PowerPoint.

“The whole world’s becoming more computer-literate,” Kranz says. “We just needed to catch up because we have hourly production people who serve on focus teams and task forces.”

Through the partnership with Butte-Glenn, Johns Manville Fiberglass is able

to not only better prepare their current employees for success, but help identify training needs within their company and the local area so that future labor needs are met.



For more information, visit butteglennadulthood.org.

Equity: This priority—which underlies all the others—gives disadvantaged students the chance to succeed

by Krysta Scriptor

San Diego is home to a large resettlement community, meaning many adult immigrants and refugees are looking for opportunities. With many adults speaking a different language or coming from diverse financial backgrounds, finding equity in education is paramount.

“Because San Diego is one of the biggest resettlement areas in the country, we always had a fairly steady influx of ESL (English as Second Language) students,” Ute Maschke, Ph.D., says. She’s the CAEP Manager at East Region Adult Education, and immigrants, ESL students and other refugees are among their largest group of students.

“We knew that we had these pockets of poverty, homelessness or unemployed people, and we needed to find new strategies to reach out to them.”

During the pandemic, that meant transitioning classrooms to a digital setting and allowing for remote access to learning, something Maschke says opened doors for many.

Why is that important? “Because we want to become better in supporting communities to become more resilient and offering educational and training programs for employment,” she says.

At East Region, equity in action means working with business partners and revising some curricula, creating incentives to get students employed quickly, and giving them the skills they need to succeed in an uncertain market. “We want to strengthen our connections to our business partners, and actually have them as advisors for our curriculum, to tell us what is needed in the training programs to meet their business needs.”

Combining ESL courses with career training, she explains, actually improves



students’ learning and gets them on their feet faster. “So we needed to tweak our curriculum to accelerate our learning experience and accelerate the entrance into the workforce.”

It’s not just about training for new jobs: With many unemployed by the COVID-19 pandemic or burnt out from the last year of working during one, learning how to bounce back after setbacks is just as crucial of a skill.

“We want to train students in ways that they are agile and resilient enough that they’re in a better position to advocate and not be trapped,” Maschke says.

Their work isn’t done, however. Maschke says the poverty and homeless rates still speak to the massive need for education

services in the area. “There’s a lot of good stuff happening right now but we need to get better at leveraging resources and coordinating efforts.”



For more information, see
<https://caladulthood.org>

A Second Chance: A local man finds success in a life-changing training program

by Matt Jocks

During his seven years in prison, Jose Avila got used to the doors that were locking him in. When his time was served, he wasn't prepared for the doors that were locking him out.

Discovering firsthand the barriers that stand between an ex-convict and a career, Avila was struggling to build a future until he found his way to the Butte County Career Technical Education program.

Avila used the training and connections he received in the program's welding course to land a job that he sees as the first step toward a career.

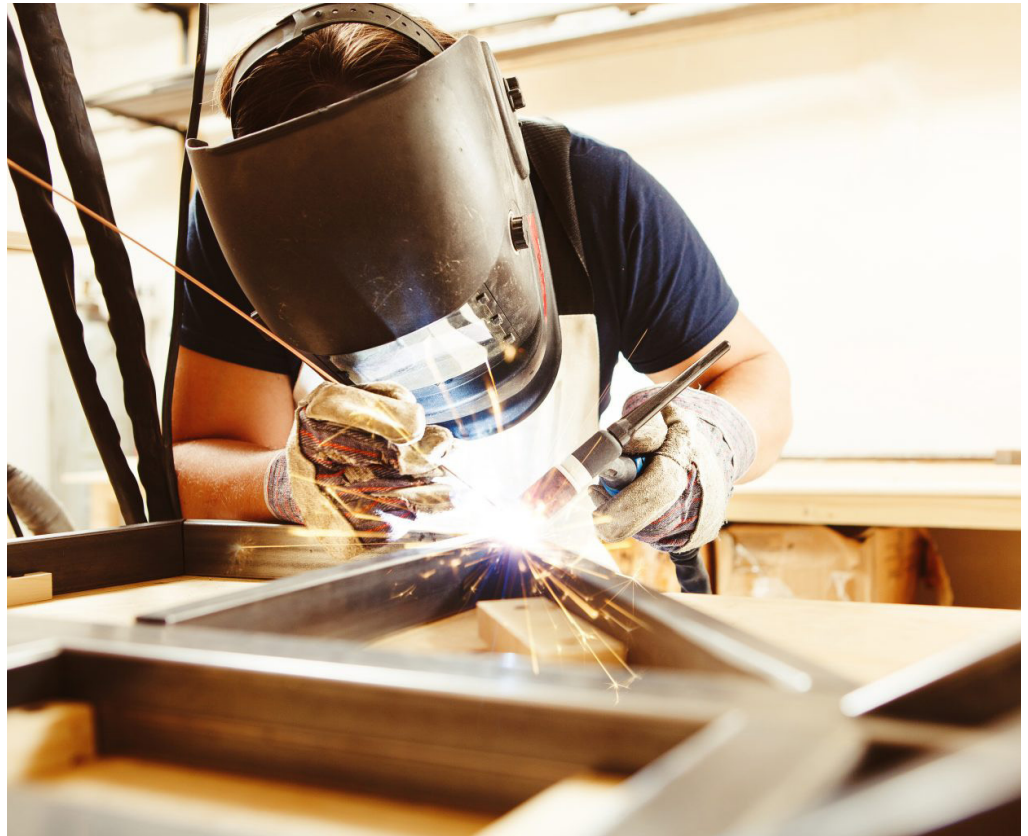
"It's minimum wage, but it's just the thing I need to get more experience and move to a better job," he says. "I learn every day."

During his sentence, Avila got plenty of work experience doing carpentry, welding, working a forklift and backhoe, and tending to calves on a farm. All along, he figured he was doing what was needed to prepare for life on the outside.

Instead, Avila found his criminal record to be a locked door.

"(Instructor Shane Gower) made me stay positive and he pushed me through when things were tough. There should be more people like this in the world."

Jose Avila
Graduate of Butte County Career Technical Education



Thanks to a life-changing training program, Jose Avila was able to turn his life around with a new career.

"But you can't be shut down because one person says you can't do something," he says. "Because of one rejection, I can't go back to being the old me."

The new Avila found the program he needed and, more important, the friend he needed in welding instructor Shane Gower.

"You keep things to yourself (in prison) because you've got to survive," Avila says. "You kind of close yourself off. But (Gower) became a real friend. I opened up to him like I hadn't before. I actually cried in front of him. I never thought I could do that."

There is one thing Avila never doubted he could do.

"I'm a hard worker," he says. "I don't mind working long hours. And I've always liked building things."

Avila says he is feeling good about the future. It just took finding the right path and, in Gower, the right guide to help him negotiate it.

"He made me stay positive and he pushed me through when things were tough," Avila says. "There should be more people like this in the world."



For more information, visit butteglennadulthood.org.

A PASSION FOR CARE

Students can receive special training for vocational jobs

By Corey Rodda

Vanessa Fines' job isn't always easy, but she is always there for her clients because of her passion for her job – sometimes even as they breathe their last breaths..

“Caregiving is emotional, but you get to see them smile,” she said.”

Fines initially wanted to become a professional caregiver so she could care for the people who were important to her: her best friend who had developed Alzheimer's disease, her 82-year-old father who moved in with her and aging members of her church.

However, she needed help in order to help them.

Fines enrolled in a vocational program through the Southern Alameda County Consortium for Adult Education at New Haven Adult School. The school's Residential & In-Home Care Training program was a 10-week program that only cost her \$250. In this program, she learned how to help



Vanessa Fines found her passion in life. The Southern Alameda County Consortium for Adult Education's programs for vocational jobs helped her turn it into a career. Photo by George E. Baker Jr.

improve her bedside manner.

“I learned how to let my clients know that no hurt, harm or danger will come to them while they are in my care,” Fines said.

When Fines saw her father gain a renewed sense of purpose after she suggested he look after her home garden, she realized her care was helping the emotional needs of her patients, not just their physical needs.

“It is my passion to care for the elderly,” she said. “I want to tell them that it is not time to give up. I want to encourage and instill into them that they still have a lot of life to live.”

Fines has also been nominated twice as “caregiver of the month” because of the care she gives her patients.

“I spend time with them,” she said. “Getting people who don't have many loved ones left in their lives motivated to get out of the house is challenging, but rewarding.”

Eighty-four percent of students who complete the Caregiver training program at New

Haven Adult School immediately find jobs with caregiving agencies, and typically start earning \$15-\$17 an hour. Fines found her first job one week before she even finished the program.

Fines now works for Kindred Healthcare and hopes to start her own assisted living facility one day. The New Haven Adult School health education teacher still meets with her regularly to make sure she is on track to reach that goal.



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**“It is my
passion to care
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Vanessa Fines, Student

individuals with Alzheimer's and dementia. She also learned other fundamentals of care, like administering medication, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, taking blood pressure and using certain types of health care machinery, such as a Hoyer Lift.

Most importantly, she learned methods of communication and empathetic care to