A Young Mother’s New Life

A few months ago Inez was homeless, living out of a backpack and traveling by skateboard. Without a place to live she was forced to send her five-year-old son, Quincy, to stay with his father while she tried to improve her situation.

Inez had a part-time job that she was thankful for, but it didn’t pay enough to change her circumstances. She would wander around every night until morning when the doors at her job were unlocked and she could go inside, get some coffee, a shower and perhaps sneak in a nap. Every day she repeated the process because she didn’t want to be late for work and risk her only income. Inez recognizes and appreciates that her employers were extremely lenient during this time due to her circumstances.

Finally, things began to fall into place when friends invited her and Quincy to move in with them. Soon afterward she saw a flyer about MassMEP's Advanced CNC Skills training program at UMass Lowell. It spoke of a chance to start a new career in an area with many opportunities. She snapped a picture of the flier with her phone and registered to attend the first orientation where she was interviewed by Leslie Parady, Workforce Development Manager at Mass MEP. Ultimately, Inez was selected from 75 applicants as one of 12 students for the program. "When I got the message from Leslie that I had been chosen I was so happy and so excited that I just cried," says Elder. "I didn't realize that Leslie needed to hear back from me right away to make sure I still wanted to participate. Thankfully she called me and I told her that YES, of course, I wanted to be in the training!"

After being accepted, that same photo on her phone and her class schedule helped secure a day school program for Quincy so he would be cared for while she was in training. Things were finally beginning to fall into place!

With graduation just days away, Inez explains that she is teaching Quincy about responsibility and is setting an example by showing him that she has to get up and ready for school every morning just like he does. Currently when her classes begin at 6am that means the two of them are getting up and ready while it is still dark. She stresses to her son that he listens for the school bus horn and that he isn't to open the door to leave until he hears it. Though her roommates are in the home she knows that Quincy is capable of getting himself out the door in the morning. So far he has been very conscientious and everything is working perfectly.
Inez is in the machine shop working with her student partner on an exercise. She is cutting a chunk of aluminum in a CNC machine which she first had to program to precise specifications. Once the piece was cut she inspected it using a micrometer, did the math, made the adjustments, then punched in different numbers on the keypad telling the machine to make one more fractional cut so that the piece would be exactly to spec. The smile on her face when she succeeded said it all!

During lunch break she was overheard explaining the whole process to another student who had not yet done the exercise. She warned him about potential mistakes tossing out measurements and using all the correct technical jargon. “I would like to master this (CNC machining) and have all I need to know in my head,” says Inez. “I don’t know how but I will get there!”

Inez was hired by NEDC Sealing Solutions in Methuen and will begin work as a Quality Inspector the Monday following graduation. She and Quincy are moving to Methuen to be closer to her new job.