

THRIVE 2021

Jack'ee Johnson, Seeds East Student

I first started at Seeds in 2015, it was for my education and to be able to move forward in my career and be a role model for my kids. I was really trying to get it before they got to this age. Seeds was just convenient as far as travelling -- I was on the bus and was staying on Kinsman and my kids were in foster care for a year and so they were on the Shaker line. When you ride up Kinsman on the 14th, you see the Free GED classes and that caught my attention. My aunt really pushed me and encouraged me; she's someone I look up to. She's like me in a way - she has 2 older boys like my boys and they remind me of them. Even she'll say "I see me in you and I know things that you are going through or could go through so it's important to get your education." She's my big motivation - her and my kids. When I was younger I always wanted to be an obstetrician. In 2017 I got my nurse's aids licence, but I'm always mistaken for the nurse. Working in the healthcare field opened my eyes to different opportunities. A lot of my friends were nurses and seeing them go through what they went through on the job and continuing their education made me want to continue mine. Actually I had an ex boyfriend who is an RN and I went to his graduation when we first started dating and was like "Oh my god, look at all these black doctors and nurses on this stage. That could be me." I was listening to their stories and what they went through and was like "If they can do it, I can do it." So I started going back to Seeds in 2018.

At the time, I was 26 and scared. I already knew it was hard. I already went through other programs like Tri-C and they didn't fit me. Those programs made me feel like I was in high school again - someone was standing up and teaching one thing to everybody rather than focusing on the individual. Here at Seeds is a totally different vibe - you're on your own accord and able to flex how you want to in order to be able to succeed. I just sit down and work with a tutor. We laugh and we bond. The process of taking Reading, SS, and Science weren't so bad - just one or two weeks - take a practice test and then go take the official. I basically have my GED, but just that Math. The Math feels nerve-wracking because it makes me work harder than the other subjects - it's not just reading comprehension, which is no problem for me. With Math, it's like you read it and you got it, but you also got to work for it. I have a love/hate toxic relationship with Math because there's a thin line between love and hate and girl, it's actually a division line! Every time I think about those other sections, I think wow, those were so easy, but now that math - it's like dodgeball aiming right for you. It's like "I'm gonna get you, I'm gonna get you before you get me." It's just hard. I'm not sure if I'm making it hard or what. But I know going on to postsecondary school I'm going to need it.

I would strongly advise people to come to Seeds to further their education. My friend and I have been on the same wavelength since we met and I've been trying to get her on Zoom. We started off as night time janitors and we got close because I didn't have a car and she barely had a car.. She was the one who got me into the STNA program and if it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be where I'm at right now. We do the same work - we get up and take care of our children but we just don't have that one piece of paper. So I try to encourage her because I know she's hella smart and she can do this. I know if I'm doin it, she can do it. But having that confidence in

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yourself is hard - it's easy to project it onto others, but it's hard to convince yourself. I try to bring anyone along who needs help, including her.

I don't really have advice for tutors - I just want to thank them. They really do devote their time and it can be difficult at times (I work with older adults, so I know). But someone having the patience to come in and sit down and walk you through all these different problems. I just appreciate them.

I want people to know that you're safe here. Seeds is one of my safe places outside of yoga. The staff always has a positive attitude no matter how depressed and crying I am--Kara you always have a smile. As soon as you walk through the door everyone, including the security guards, has a positive vibe and it makes me feel safe and supported. I don't know what I would look forward to if I wasn't coming here. Yeah, getting your GED is important, but actually sitting down with someone who actually cares about your goals is so much more important. Knowing that I can come back after I graduate...which will be NOVEMBER 29TH!, it doesn't make me as scared to go on.