

E3 Power Centers Provide Success and Motivation for a West Philadelphia Neighbor

Ronee Robinson, 21, may have been “stuck for a minute,” but she was never out.

A single mother residing in West Philadelphia with her son, Ronee recently joined more than 70 other E3 Power Center graduates in walking across First District Plaza’s Grand Ballroom stage to receive her diploma. Each graduate, assisted by Philadelphia Youth Network’s vast array of resources and its E3 Power Centers’ operating affiliates, secured his or her place by passing the Commonwealth’s GED Exam in either 2013 or 2014.

“I had tried a number of different job programs and public schools, but I just didn’t seem to be learning anything,” said Robinson candidly. Originally hailing from Charlotte, Ronee shuttled back and forth between the Delaware Valley and North Carolina, never really finding a rhythm with school. After several attempts to join an educational and/or vocational program that would serve her needs,



Ronee Robinson

she found the Center City E3 program (operated by JEVS Human Services) via a flyer and friend’s referral.

A “neighborhood-based, holistic approach” that assists out-of-school youth and youth returning from juvenile placement in achieving and realizing long-term “educational, career and personal goals, including self-sufficiency,” “Of the many great students that we have here, Ronee was just a spit-fire from the start,” noted Tara Mullen, Program Director of JEVS’

E3 Center City. “She arrived in December of 2013 and knew exactly what she wanted - her diploma - and some work experience to further her future plans.”

Pushing her way through the GED quickly, Ronee knew that obtaining work was also necessary to support her 1-year-old son. With the assistance of JEVS staff, Ronee secured a Paid Work Experience/internship position in the main office of Warren G. Harding Middle School - and was so well liked at the school that she was asked to complete two internship cycles, plus work an extension on both cycles.

“When I walked across the stage, it really made me feel like I had done something,” said Robinson. “I’ve been busy filling out the paperwork and have scheduled a tour of a college already, but it made me think about what I’ve done so far.”

Robinson’s story - and the pride of her godmother,

who wants to display the diploma on her wall - is not unique to the E3 programs. Frequently, students have faced obstacles or hardships in their lives that have made traditional school an imperfect fit. With services that include GED support, life/education planning, job readiness, employment placement, financial skills and counseling, E3 provides an opportunity for its members to reboot their lives and launch forward from a stronger position.

“We’re as accountable to the students as they are to each other,” noted Mullen. “In Ronee’s case, she’s been patient and friendly with her friends, but she lets them know if their attendance is spotty and lovingly reels them back in.”

That blend of discipline and compassion starts from the top, according to Robinson.

“I felt very alone before,” she noted. “Teachers are pressured and it’s tough to give attention (to everyone). At E3, no one would give up on me; in fact, they want us to know that we’re not alone in try-

ing to make a better life.”

That assistance has included Robinson’s paid practice tests and GED Exams, as well as the Paid Work Experience and college counseling. Ronee dreams of becoming a nurse or pediatrician, or possibly working in the field of social work once she receives her college degree. For now, though, she is looking to secure paid employment and her driver’s license - two steps to allow her and her son greater flexibility and mobility.

“I needed the support I got here,” she says, beaming broadly. “E3 made me realize how many opportunities are out there, and it’s hard to pick just one - but now I know I can do anything!”

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Are you or is someone you know between the ages of 16-21 and out-of-school, wondering about the next step? Are you looking for FREE assistance in getting your diploma or obtaining some job-readiness training? Call E3 Center City at 267-238-3180 or email E3@jevs.org for more information.

Restaurant & Food Business Plan Workshop

WHO:

Common Table Applicants
Restaurant & Food Business
Entrepreneurs

WHEN:

Tuesday, August 12, 2014
6:00-7:30pm

WHERE:

The Enterprise Center
4548 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139

Take the first step in launching your own restaurant or food business. Learn how to create a business plan, featuring expertise from The Enterprise Center (TEC) and Wharton Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

The Common Table Fellowship Program requires a business plan as part of the application process. Read more about the pop-up restaurant incubator at commontablephilly.com.

RSVP

This event is free, however please [register here](#) to save your spot! Questions? Contact Allina Yang at ayang@theenterprisecenter.com.

