

PROGRAMS: Work Ready, Strictly Business

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We could all use a little inspiration. Here's some from a Philadelphia mother of nine.

By Helen Ubiñas



Chanta Scott, a Philadelphia mother of nine, was awarded the 2020 Inspiration Award from JEVS Human Services.

Already I'm wondering how Chanta Scott does it all, and we've only been talking for a few minutes.

She's a mother of nine children, ages 4 to 22.

She works full time at Jefferson University Hospital as an operating room technician.

She's launching an online clothing store this month.

And then she says something that makes me instantly regret the fistful of potato chips I'd shoved in my mouth right before our call.

She works out every day. Like, religiously. Enthusiastically. She has the Instagram posts to prove it.

(Damn salt and pepper chips!)

Inspiration can be hard to come by these endless Zoom-filled days.

So, here's a little — or actually, a lot — from a Philadelphia mother who was recently honored with the 2020 Inspiration Award from [JEVS Human Services](#).

Scott, 41, turned to JEVS' Work Ready program last year after she broke her toe and was out of work for eight months.

She quickly realized some of the skills she was learning at the program — including customer service — could be applied to any job. She was a star pupil, especially when her instructors learned of all she'd overcome.

"She embodies positivity," her instructor Valerie Jackson said. "Life happens but she keeps moving."

Scott's life was unstable as a child. She ended up in foster care for several years as her mother struggled with addiction, and Scott was left to care for her younger siblings. Her father wasn't present, but trauma was a constant. She's lost multiple friends to gun violence.

"I had to be an adult at an early age, but I knew I wanted to go to school and go to work and take care of myself."



Chanta Scott, pictured with eight of her nine children, after receiving the 2020 Inspiration Award from JEVS Human Services.

She graduated from high school. She's three courses short of a bachelor's degree she intends on getting soon. But it was a struggle. She married and started a family at 19. She and her first husband divorced. Seven of her nine children are diagnosed with ADHD, bipolar disorder, or autism.

"Some days I do feel like breaking, but I know that I can't."

After giving birth to her seventh child, Scott turned to exercise as a way to manage her weight, and stress.

"I work out, I eat good, that's what gives me the strength to stay calm. It's my outlet."

Her husband and the older kids help out. So does her mom, who she's reconciled with and who lives right around the corner. Three of the older kids work together at FedEx and chip in to the household where they all live.

Above all, Scott tries to stay positive, but she concedes it can be hard. There are days that call for a good cry in the car, and she makes no apologies for that.

But mostly, Scott, who is a devout Muslim, said exercise and prayer get her through.

She highly recommends both, as well as gratitude — something she's leaned into recently after she, her oldest son, and her husband recovered from COVID-19.

Scott's job at the hospital also helps keep life in perspective. Scott preps operating rooms for incoming patients, who these days are increasingly gunshot victims. She transports them to the morgue when they don't make it.

"The majority are very young, maybe 14 to 21," she said. "It's sad, and it's hard, especially as a mother of seven sons, not to think, that could be my son. That *is* someone's son."

She knows better than many that it can be hard to break free of trauma before it breaks you. But she's also inspiring proof that it's possible.

"I wasn't raised the best but I turned out how I wasn't raised," Scott said.