

## Basic Skills Plus Participants Receive Career Training While Completing a GED



Frederick Dobbin has accomplished a lot in his 59 years. As a member of the Navy, he served in the Vietnam War. Then he worked as a truck driver for more than two decades. But he never earned a high school diploma. Now, he is going back to school - not only to earn his GED, but also to receive training that will allow him to work as a nursing assistant.

"It's fun just being around younger people and trying to keep up with them because you're never too old to learn, and I'm learning something new every day," he said.

Dobbin is among the first participants in the new Basic Skills Plus Program at Southeastern Community College, which allows students to prepare for employment in allied-health fields while completing their GED.

A Healthcare Academy course early in the program helps students determine a career path by providing an overview of various employment opportunities in the industry. Students, like Dobbin, who are interested in becoming a nurse aide may enroll in a Nursing Assistant I course – an exception to the standard requirement that students earn a high school diploma or GED prior to enrolling in the Nurse Aide Program.

"The Basic Skills Plus Program supports student success by providing participants with real-world job skills while they complete their GED," said Karen Gore, Basic Skills Plus career coach. "We have found that the accelerated timeline and close integration of Basic Skills instruction with workforce preparation really motivates the students."

After completing the Basic Skills Plus Program, Melissa Yanez, 29, a mother of four, plans to work as a nurse aide to provide for her family. She hopes to return to school to become a registered nurse and eventually work in labor and delivery.

The Guideway resident became interested in pursuing a healthcare career after growing close to the home health workers who cared for her grandmother.

"They were very inspiring people," Yanez said.

Advancing through different stages of the Basic Skills Plus Program with the same group of students has allowed Yanez and her classmates to form a support network that has proven important to their collective success.

"They're in the same situation we are. They want to better their future," she said.

Yanez credits Telamon Corporation for helping her advance her education. The non-profit organization, which partners with SCC on many workforce development initiatives, provides resources and services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. She also praises the Basic Skills Plus career coaches, who provide guidance for students throughout the program.

"Don't give up," Yanez said. "There are people out there who are willing to help you and support you."

In addition to working toward their GED and nurse aide certification, participants in the Basic Skills Plus Program complete a Career Readiness Certification (CRC), a nationally recognized credential that assesses their ability in three core sets of skills: reading for information, locating information and applied mathematics. Based on their performance in the three areas, individuals are awarded a bronze, silver or gold Career Readiness Certificate.

Basic Skills Plus also prepares students to take the Medication Aide Exam, which, along with Nurse Aide I certification, would enable them to work in a skilled nursing facility.

"The Basic Skills Plus Program allows students to obtain marketable skills to meet local employment requirements," said Crystal Griffin, Basic Skills Plus career coach. "We have already seen how this program has impacted the lives of our students in a very positive manner giving them the confidence they need to succeed."

Individuals interested in participating in the Basic Skills Plus Program are encouraged to contact the College as soon as possible, as the next round of courses begins Feb. 6. Financial assistance is available for students who qualify.

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