

Profiles of Hope



Diane Oksienik made the decision to stay home with her three children during their youth. Once all three had reached adolescence and adulthood, Diane was ready to return to the workforce. However, with only a high school diploma and no work experience for 29 years, Diane felt woefully underqualified for most positions which interested her. She also had a latent desire to go to college, which had been buried under layers of fear for many years. After meeting with a case manager at Project Self-Sufficiency, Diane screwed up her courage and inquired about applying to Sussex County Community College. She was very surprised to learn that she was eligible for substantial financial aid. She tentatively registered for one course. She was tempted to quit after her first day of college because she was so overwhelmed. However, her Project Self-Sufficiency case manager convinced her to keep trying, so Diane agreed to attend for one more day.

Those days turned into years, as Diane completed her coursework at SCCC and continued her education. She graduated from SCCC with an Associate's Degree in Human Services in 2008. From there, Diane moved on to Rutgers in pursuit of a degree in social work. She graduated from Rutgers in 2010, having carried a heavy course load while holding down a full-time job. After considering her options, Diane elected to try for a Master's Degree. The coursework was arduous, involving 24 hours a week of field work in addition to the full-time course load. Diane plunged on, completing her Master's Degree in 2011. She passed her exam and became a Licensed Social Worker.

Diane is now employed full-time as a Social Worker at St. Luke's Hospital in Phillipsburg. She also works part-time within the Atlantic Health Care System. Her specialty is working with children. Her own children are successful adults who live in New Jersey, Colorado and Michigan. Today, Diane continues to mull over her options. She is considering going after a law degree, noting that her ultimate dream is to be a Social Worker and an Attorney. However, she is also contemplating a Master's Degree in Healthcare Administration.

"Project Self-Sufficiency really made a difference in my life. I feel very grateful for the people who I met that gave me the support I needed to find some faith in myself."

Diane Oksienik,
60
3 children

Diane Oksienik
