

Profiles of Hope



At the age of 54, Kristi Rowan had out-of-date computer skills, no job and failing hope. On the positive side, she was armed with a Bachelor's Degree and had work experience as a teacher and as a church secretary. However, her computer skills were antiquated and her years of staying at home to raise a child had interrupted her career path. She spent several months fruitlessly applying for jobs, and then decided that she needed to update her computer skills. Expensive computer training was not an option because both Kristi and her husband were unemployed. Kristi learned about Project Self-Sufficiency through an article in a local newspaper. She picked up the phone and began the process of changing her life.

"I spoke with a counselor and registered to take computer classes. The counselor encouraged me to take a look at the 'Higher Opportunities for Women' program," recalled Kristi. The "Higher Opportunities for Women" program at Project Self-Sufficiency offers 16 weeks of computer training, along with classroom instruction in workplace etiquette, resume preparation, interview skills, and job searching techniques. Participants round out their experience with on-the-job work at a local employer. "This is exactly what I needed," noted Kristi. "The program taught me so many things about job hunting, from writing a resume to handling myself in an interview. More importantly, I gained confidence in myself through activities and discussions in the class about self-esteem, goal-setting and time management."

Kristi worked diligently in the computer classes at Project Self-Sufficiency, upgrading her skills and applying them successfully during her internship. With the help of Project Self-Sufficiency, she secured an interview at a nearby medical office and was offered a full-time job. "I went to the interview armed with the knowledge that I had just learned from the classes at Project Self-Sufficiency and nailed it! I was so happy!"

Project Self-Sufficiency offers a variety of programs designed to assist low-income families on the path to economic self-sufficiency. Computer classes and help with resume-writing, interview skills and workplace etiquette are offered at the agency's Career Center, along with GED instruction, testing and assessment and classes in financial management. The agency also offers parenting skills workshops, legal assistance and education, childcare, life skills classes, home visitation for new parents, family activities, teen youth employment programs, and help with emergency basic needs like food and clothing. Most services are free to income-eligible families; many programs are open to the public. For more information about the programs offered at Project Self-Sufficiency, call 973-940-3500 or visit www.projectsufficiency.org.

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Kristi Rowan