

herselves," she says. "Nobody else is going to do it for us."

Storey is grateful to CWJC and her mentor, Dawn Ferguson. "I thank all the supporters and volunteers for blessing us with a good program that empowers and supports women," she said.

Gladys Vaughn

Having a baby became Gladys Vaughn's reason to strive for a better life. "I didn't want her to think I was a failure," admits Vaughn.

So one day – as she was holding her baby in front of the television – a message came across the screen about Christian Women's Job Corps. "I took the number down and called," she said.

"I was down and depressed at the time," said the 39-year-old. "I wanted something better in my life. I had prayed for an answer. I didn't know the resources available or who could help me."

After calling CWJC, Vaughn discovered there was a waiting list, and she had to wait for a month before she began the program in September 2005. When Vaughn began the program, her number one goal was getting her GED. She had dropped out of school in the ninth grade because she

worked steadily at Kentucky Fried Chicken for 12 years, but has been past up for promotion opportunities because of her lack of education. And that future looks bright as she starts classes to become a medical assistant next week!

Dawn Woodard

When Dawn Woodard discovered CWJC last spring, she was single with no children and already a high school graduate. What she was looking for was confidence. She was unemployed and unsure of her future.

The 25-year-old, who has battled depression for several years, says it's a daily struggle for her, but through CWJC she's changed. "I'm more confident and more independent because of my participation in CWJC. It's a really good ministry. It's changed my life tremendously."

While her classes have

helped her a great deal, Woodard says that so has her mentor Jacque Tomlin. "We meet every Tuesday and go to lunch," she said. "I don't have a car, so she's taken me on interviews too. She's really a good person and is like a second mom to me."

Bible class has also helped. "I've grown more in the Lord," Woodard said. "Every week I've learned something new."

While she's still in search of a job with benefits, she says that she's more competent in the interviews. She's been practicing her typing skills on her own and is hoping to find a job as an office clerk or receptionist because she's a good organizer.

Her advice to others who may be struggling is to remember there's always tomorrow. "What you think is the end of the world today, usually isn't," she said. "It always changes tomorrow."

For more information about CWJC,

visit www.cwjcmiddletn.org

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Connection

Published for friends of CWJC of Middle Tennessee

Graduates tell their stories, give thanks

point in her life where she now feels like she can make a better life for her family.

"I just thank all the volunteers for creating this program for people like me that gives me a chance," she said.

Martina Cartwright

At 27, Martina Cartwright was tired of working fast food jobs – that's all she had been doing since she dropped out of school at 15.

Her cousin had gotten her GED through CWJC a few years ago and referred Cartwright to them for help in getting hers. Six months ago, she enrolled in the program and today she's graduating.

"Math was a little tricky," she said. "But I didn't really have problems with anything else." She passed the exam on her first attempt.

Now, Cartwright, a single mother of two, is looking for a better job. "I'm not sure what it will be, but I've got my GED now, and it won't be fast food," she stated.

Cartwright says her mentor, Susan Barnett, has been a great help to her. "If I need something, she helps me," said Cartwright. "We talk, she gives me advice and she listens. I don't have a car, and she takes me to appointments sometimes too."

At first, Cartwright admits that she was a little embarrassed about going for her GED. She thought she'd "be the oldest one there."

With a 19-month-old baby

Tech and will be pursuing a BS in nursing.

While the past year has been tough, light is breaking through at the end of the tunnel. Curry's husband has just gone back to work. Her parents are in the process of trying to move to Nashville to help her with childcare needs. And starting in January, she's on her way to a new career in nursing!

Wanda Gambrell

For 10 years, Wanda Gambrell owned and ran her own business – a 24-hour day care center – something she started when she couldn't find suitable care for her grandchild. While she loved her business and the interaction with the kids, running the place was exhausting. But she said it made her feel worthwhile and slowing down wasn't an option.

Health concerns and the final realization that she was addicted to work, caused Gambrell to seek the help of Teen Life Challenge. During her time in this program, she participated in a few CWJC classes and decided she wanted to participate in it 100%.

After two years in CWJC, she's back on her feet and working as a caregiver – but this time she knows that she has to take care of herself as well.

Gambrell was seeking computer skills when she first started with CWJC. She says she's really got a good start on

and a six-year-old, this single mom says it hasn't been easy.

Her advice to others in a similar situation is not to let that – or age – stop you. "No matter what, you can get it done," she stated.

Tiffany Curry

Tiffany Curry is right there along side the apostle Paul when it comes to perseverance. This past year has been one of the toughest this 22-year-old mother of five has faced.

About this time last year, she and her husband and four children left their home in Indiana to work for FEMA following Hurricane Katrina.

On the way, their truck broke down in Nashville. That weekend they attended worship services at Eastland Baptist where they were surrounded by a congregation of loving people who took them under their wings.

Curry, who had only completed the 11th grade, was referred to CWJC by someone in the church. She was hooked up with her mentor, Kara Urban, and started working toward her goal of getting her GED. She took the pretest in August and failed three sections. One of her toughest subjects was math, and that's where her mentor helped her.

"Kara is the greatest woman on earth," said Curry. "She worked with me until I got it." Curry took her GED in December and passed. She's been accepted to Tennessee

CWJC extends

**"A Hand Up,
Not A Hand Out"**

We provide potential for transformation of the body, mind, heart, and spirit of the working poor and volunteers who serve them.



those. Now, her goal is to get her bachelor's and maybe a little further down the road, her masters in psychology. She's already got two years of college credit with plans to enroll in January.

Gambrell has faced health problems, a divorce, the loss of her home and the challenge of caring for an autistic and a deaf child. Yet, she says the biggest obstacle she has had to overcome in her 63 years of life is learning to believe in herself. "I now realize that God wants us to succeed," she said. "I really believe when it (the Bible) says ask for it and you'll receive it if you believe."

Gambrell credits Teen Life Challenge and CWJC as well as her mentor Dixie Keith with helping her grow spiritually during the past three years. "Dixie's great," she said. "She encourages me and keeps me on track."

As a result, Gambrell realizes that she is capable, and she is worthy!

Belinda Henley

Pregnant at age 18, Belinda Henley quit high school her senior year. To make ends meet, she became an exotic dancer. "All I ever did was dance," she admits. "I didn't spend any time with my daughter."

A little over two years ago, CWJC and the McKenzie Faith Foundation – an organization that reaches out to exotic dancers in Nashville who need help when they are trying to leave the dancing profession – joined forces to help Henley find a new life. She is now working two jobs – one where she's the manager of a motel and training other employees and going to school to become a medical assistant.

"I don't have any benefits

at my job now," she added. "I'm looking for a position in a doctor's office. I just have four more months of training to become a medical assistant."

Henley's goals upon coming to CWJC were to get her GED and to learn computer skills. She's been able to achieve both. "My computer classes have really helped me get where I am in my current job," she said.

Henley, 24, says she took the GED test over three times before she passed everything and had enough points to pass.

"After three attempts, I had passed all the sections, but I didn't have enough total points, and I didn't pass the essay part," she said. "And I didn't know how to do essays."

"I got discouraged, but I stuck it out with the support of my mentor, Dawn White, and CWJC because I knew I had to so that I could make a better life for me and my child," she added. "And so, my child won't make the same mistake I did."

Neacole O'Neal

About one-and-a-half years ago, Neacole O'Neal was having a hard time making ends meet. As a single mother of five, she had gotten behind on some of her bills – even though she was working. In fact, she's worked all her life, and she was tired of what she calls survival jobs. "I wanted a career," she said.

She found help at Eastland Baptist Church when someone referred her to CWJC.

"They (CWJC) started motivating and shaping me," she said. "I wanted a better job, and they delivered."

O'Neal is the first CWJC participant to be selected to work for HCA in a special joint venture to help women



Graduate Carolyn Page, right, works with volunteer teacher Betsy Watson in the computer lab at the CWJC center located in downtown Nashville.

get better jobs. She's processing patient correspondence and after only two months on the job is currently handling 55 to 60 letters a day – all on the computer.

"Before I came to CWJC, I didn't have any computer skills," she said. "We had a computer in the house and all my kids used it, but I didn't. CWJC helped break it down for me. Now I use it all day."

O'Neal, 34, graduated from high school, but she admits that she just did enough to get by and get out. She never applied herself. Now, she has a passion for learning. "I want to keep broadening my education, keep learning," she said.

O'Neal says her mentor, Cassandra Keeble, and CWJC brought her closer to God. "My biggest obstacle in life has been learning to trust God," she said. "CWJC has helped me overcome that obstacle. You've just got to hold on to your faith. Believe in God."

Carolyn Page

Just when Carolyn Page thought there were no more good people left in the world, she found CWJC and began changing her mind.

mentor, Myrna Deere, as well as the other volunteers, she's gained the confidence she needs. "I love all the volunteers ... their encouragement that I can do this – their love – their support – their belief in God – their belief in prayer. I just love them all!"

Dorothy Ray

"To God be the glory," admits Dorothy Ray "I couldn't have made it without all these volunteers," she added, including her mentor, Barbara Oldham. "These are special people. To volunteer their time to help someone else – that's a sacrifice. God has blessed me to have these people in my life, and they've kept me from giving up."

Ray, who has four children, has been a single parent since she was 15. The ninth-grade dropout got her first apartment in the projects at age 16. For all those years, everybody had been looking to her for support and help. "I did everything for everybody for so long, I lost sight of Dorothy," she admits.

A few years ago, she was sending in applications for housing when a social worker pointed her to CWJC as a resource for help with getting her GED. She readily admits that after being out of school for more than 35 years, math has been her toughest subject. "Sometimes I think – I've done just fine without algebra – I don't need it. But then I say – I do if I want to get my GED!"

Dorothy was one of several participants who received a computer that had been donated to CWJC. As a result, she was able to get online and communicate with her son who was serving in Iraq.

"That's been a real blessing," she added.

Carla Rutkowski

About two years ago, Earline Clark graduated from CWJC. She re-entered the program – only this time, as a volunteer. She recruited a coworker, Carla Rutkowski, to become a participant and was paired with her as her mentor. Today, Carla says her best friend – Clark – has really helped her get through a lot.

Rutkowski was a nurse for 26 years before health problems put her in a position where she could no longer function in that job. Her initial goal when she entered CWJC was to gain computer proficiency, but nerve damage to her right arm is preventing her from achieving that goal.

But she still says that Bible study and the life skills training have blessed her. "They gave me hope when I didn't have any," she admits. At 58, Rutkowski has custody of her six-year-old grandchild who she says benefited from the one-on-one tutoring

provided by CWJC. Rutkowski says she's faced obstacles all her life. She's raised four kids on her own and went back to high school and got her GED when her oldest was in high school. From there, she got into a nurse training program and passed her entrance exams.

Rutkowski works for the National Council on Aging and helps seniors 55 and over find employment. She says she appreciates all the volunteers so much. "They're wonderful

to give of their time, energy and spirit to help us," she said.

Yvette Sharp

About two years ago, Yvette Sharp was attending the graduation of a friend from CWJC. She was in recovery and had been clean for four months. Watching graduation, she says she "saw how those women had been transformed through the program, and I wanted what they had."

She enrolled a few months later and is well on her way to her ultimate goal of becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse or a medical assistant.

"I was a broken child when I came to CWJC," Sharp said. "But I've been helped so much. Bible study has really helped me. I want to give God my all. I've been put back together into a beautiful woman!"

"My mentor, René Holt, has been my biggest inspiration in life," she added. "We met faithfully, and we said we're going to do this, this and this. And, we did it!"

Sharp, a 38-year-old single mom with two teenage sons at home, was without transportation when she first enrolled. As a result, she was getting up every morning at 5:00 to catch the bus for work. A CWJC supporter donated a van to the organization and as a result, Sharp now has her own wheels!

"If I see someone discouraged – like I was in the past – I just tell them not to give up before the miracle happens," says Sharp. "God has something for you. You don't know what's going on right now. But He's got a plan. Hold your head up."

She now tells other women who may be struggling to "never give up. This is something we have to do for our-

Sharp is planning to enroll in the National College of Business and Technical Institute to pursue her career in nursing. "I'm now a productive member of society," she said. "I'm becoming a good mom and a better Christian. I can see God's hand in my life."

Yolanda Storey

At the age of 16, Yolanda Storey dropped out of high school because she didn't like it. In fact, she hated it.

Her mom tried to get her to go back, but she started working at fast food jobs and refused. Discontent, she tried the Job Corps for a year, but that didn't fit her either.

At the age of 29, she began a job as a custodian at Cockrill Elementary School where she is currently employed. But she dreams of a better job. Two years ago, a fellow custodian told her about CWJC – where she was in the process of working to get her GED – and encouraged Storey to give them a call.

Today, Storey is graduating from the program! While she's yet to attain her GED, she has been connected through CWJC with a one-on-one tutor who is helping her improve her reading and comprehension skills to prepare her to take her GED.

Storey's other goals upon entering the program were to learn more about the Bible and to gain computer skills – both of which she's accomplished. "The most helpful part of the program to me was the one-on-one time and the Bible study," she says. As a result, she says she's "more confident."

She now tells other women who may be struggling to "never give up. This is something we have to do for our-