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## Silvester

### Testing Center: Central Community College

Both of my parents had a second grade education. They worked as migrant field workers and moved around a lot, but our home base was in Brownsville, Texas. We lived in a poor neighborhood just outside of the city. Our neighborhood was full of predators, gangs, and drugs. At the age of four, I started to experience a lot of sexual abuse at the hands of neighbors (both men and women.) I also experienced a lot of physical abuse at the hands of my violent; alcoholic father at home and from gang members at school. As a result, I joined a gang when I was in third grade.

I spent my early childhood afraid of everything and everyone. One night my father was preparing to celebrate his birthday. While he waited for his friends to arrive, he sat outside drinking beer. I approached him and for some unknown reason, I asked him if I could have a beer. I was eight years old. My father (to my surprise) said, "Yes." I drank the beer. After, I asked if I could have another. His response: "Don't ask me anymore, if you want it, take it." That night I got drunk for the very first time in my life. Thinking back on it now, I know this was not good for me but back then I thought I had found the answer. You see, for the first time in my short life, I did not feel afraid. The alcohol seemed to make things all right. The constant debilitating anxiety, fear and sadness that I felt daily was gone! After that night, I would drink alcohol any chance that I got.

As I got older, I found what I thought was another solution to my ongoing problem of sexual and physical abuse: rage and violence. I began to lash out in violence at anyone that I perceived as a threat to me. The result of this was that the sexual abuse stopped. I also moved up very quickly through the gang ranks due to this. I recall very clearly feeling pride in the fact that at the age of fourteen, I was drinking and fighting daily. As you can imagine, this led to a lot of problems at school. I failed the fourth grade because of fights, suspension, and just general lack of interest. This got worse as I got older. Finally, I dropped out of school my first week of being a freshman in high school. My father passed away due to complications that resulted from his alcoholism, my mother turned to prescription drugs as a way to cope and I fell deeper and deeper into a hopeless abyss. By this time, I was using any drug I could manage to get my hands on. I was 13 years old and had no hope for any type of future that was not prison or death.

My older brother went to prison on charges of possession with intent to distribute marijuana. He had been caught on his way to Florida with eighty pounds of marijuana. My Godfather had seen enough. He spoke to my mom and she agreed to allow him to raise me. He tried very hard to keep me away from the gangs but he could not. His solution was to bring me to Nebraska and drop me off at his eldest son's house. Trouble followed, but in 2001, I found myself in a jail cell in Ogallala, Nebraska on charges of assault. While there, I met a counselor who spoke to me about treatment and after some time, I agreed to go. I spent 30 days in treatment and after, I opted to move to Grand Island to move into the Friendship House, a halfway house for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. It is there that I learned about the GED® program at St. Stephan's Community Center. I did not attend, but now, I'd heard of it. After a two year relapse, I came back into the program and was able to stabilize my addiction with the help of some very dedicated people. I finally made it to the GED® center in 2006. I worked hard and earned my GED® diploma. I was honored to be asked to speak for that year's graduating class. My GED® helped me to apply and to be accepted into the Neuroscience program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I completed my program in December of 2015. I am currently employed by LTC Midwest, LLC as the Chief Executive Officer at Blue Valley Lutheran Homes.

The best advice that I can give anyone is to simply look at my journey. It doesn't matter what you have been through or what others have inflicted on you. You can overcome all of that and be successful in life. However, in order to do that, you have to find a starting point and your GED® is, in my opinion, one of the most important starting points on a journey of successes. I am a firm believer in passing forward the message of hope. I remember how scared I was and how much doubt I had that I would pass the GED® exam. I want to let others know that not only can you pass the GED® exam, but you can continue to learn and achieve. I believe that communities should support their local GED® programs to increase the number of productive and self-supporting members of society.



**Perla**

**GED Testing Center: Metropolitan Community College**

For me, the GED® was a very important step. It is a very satisfying experience in all aspects of life. Personally, obtaining this diploma made me see things completely differently. Since, at different times, I put up obstacles without realizing that I was the only barrier for them. So, I decided to set an example that education is the only weapon to excel in this country or anywhere else. Indeed, it is very important to continue studying and to have more institutions like this that give you so many opportunities to better yourself.



**Eliester**

**GED® Testing Center: Metropolitan Community College**

First of all, I thank God for this achievement! I am very happy to see that now all my extra effort has been rewarded. I feel a great satisfaction of having accomplished my purpose and I am very pleased to have taken the step of continuing with my studies.

I believe that this achievement is a step toward my next challenge. Thanks to the people who gave me their support especially my parents who were the ones who planted in my heart the desire to enrich my education. Nelson and my little Jose, I love you guys.



**Reynalda**

**GED® Testing Center: Metropolitan Community College**

Hello everyone, my name is Reynalda. I'm so glad I finished my GED®. First it was a dream that became a goal since I was inspired by my three children and as their mother. They are my pride. Now that I've finished my GED®, my daughters are proud of me for my success and I will continue to further my education. I am also trying to encourage more adults like me to study and help them realize that as adults, if we can continue to study and give a good example to our children, they would likely do the same. Obtaining my GED® was one of my dreams come true!



**Tim**

**GED® Testing Center: Southeast Community College**

I was a high school dropout for 20 years. I'd always wanted higher paying jobs, but only found closed doors. In those 20 years, I did make half-hearted attempts at a GED® diploma, but found more excuses than motivation. In finally found that education is more important than goofing off. I was assigned a study location and met friendly teachers who were eager to help me. When I stopped thinking of how long it would take to complete my GED® and started thinking only of the day I'd get it, T.I.M.E. (Things I must earn) went fast. In April 2006, I was awarded my high school diploma from the Nebraska Department of Education. With my newfound understanding about the importance of Education, I enrolled in college and maintained a 3.8 GPA.



**Josie**

**GED® Testing Center: Crete Public School**

I was born and raised in Mexico, but when I was 18 years old, my large family and I moved to Nebraska. I taught myself how to speak English by watching the news on television. However, I still couldn't read English. I married a local farmer and we had two children. I soon realized their mother needed to know how to read to them. In 1996, I got my GED® in English. It was hard work but it was all worth it. It changed my life and that of those close to me. I now work as a citizenship teacher/home visitor for Crete Public Schools.



**Henry**

**GED® Testing Center: Alliance Public Schools**

I had good jobs but I was always stopped because of my lack of a high school diploma. At one point, I was working in a meat packing plant. I'd passed all the tests for USDA certification, but was told I needed a high school diploma to go any further. I finally made the commitment to get my GED®. The ABE program provided flexible times and great teachers. Graduation was one of the most important days of my life. I have a good job and my family is proud of me. Never again will the lack of a high school diploma hold me back.



**J.W.**

**GED® Test Center: Crete Public Schools**

I was 17 years old when my son, Colby, was born. I was almost halfway through my senior year of high school and needed to be able to support my family and make sure that they were taken care of. I made the choice to exchange my school clothes for work clothes and left high school behind. Not long after that, I knew that by forgoing the remainder of my senior year, I had given up chances of higher paying jobs and possible career advancements. That's when I found out about the GED® program sponsored by the Crete Public Schools. With the help of the wonderful teachers at the Adult Education Program, we set a game plan of what areas I needed to focus on, and where my opportunities were. The pre-tests were a great help in finding my placement as compared to where I should have been. There were always multiple tutors and support people available to help with any studying that I needed to complete. At

the end of the year, I was ready to complete the required tests, and passed them all. It was a very proud day for my family and me when my name was called at the commencement ceremony. Everyone knew that I was capable of completing all things required for the program. I just needed a little help along the way, which was provided by the program directors.

Since earning the diploma, I have gone on to complete an Associate's Degree in Accounting. At the commencement ceremony, I was awarded the Outstanding Graduate Award for the Business Department, an honor which is given to one student per graduation class as voted on by the faculty. I am currently employed as the General Manager of the Burger King in Crete, Nebraska. Through this position, I also travel to Omaha monthly to train new managers as they come into our organization. I was also recognized as one of the outstanding managers with our company as far as customer service and friendliness in the workplace. All of these achievements have been directly related to the assistance I received from the staff of the Adult Education Program. Even after I graduated and moved forward in my career, I have always been able to go back to them and ask for assistance with any issues I may be having. If I have employees that come to work here and have not yet graduated, I always suggest them getting in touch with the program directors and getting their lives back on track because I know how much of a positive impact the staff of the Program can be. People don't always do the best that they can while in high school, and I know personally that I wouldn't have been able to reach my goals without the help of the GED® Program. Thank you.



**Robert**

**GED® Testing Program: Western Nebraska Community College**

I'm so glad that I finally finished my education. It was very important for me to finally get my GED. I wanted to make my mother, grandfather and my siblings very proud of me. It felt, very good to walk down the aisle to get my diploma. It felt great! Being 23 years old and finally getting my GED® meant the world to me! Now I can move on with my life and better myself. My plans are to go to school. I'm planning on attending Fuller School of Hair Design. Meanwhile, while going to school, I'm going to be working part time at Applebee's as a server. And once I finish the 13 month program, I will apply at one of the Salons here in Scottsbluff and hopefully that will be a career I enjoy. I would encourage others who haven't finished their education to go up to Western Nebraska Community College and finish their education. Like I said before, it's a wonderful feeling to graduate! Good luck to all! Reach for the stars!

Anybody can accomplish their education.



**Albert**

**GED® Testing Center: Scottsbluff County Corrections**

I have just recently received my GED® diploma and I'm looking forward to furthering my education. I plan on enrolling in college and studying auto mechanics, auto body, and aviation. Upon completion, I plan on going into a career where I can use these skills, which are being an automobile mechanic and pilot.



**Chris**

**GED® Testing Center: Bellevue Public Schools**

I spent many years thinking that I just wasn't smart enough or good enough and I spent years upon years trying to self-destruct. I thought that I wanted my life to be over because of addictions and life threatening illnesses. I have now learned that if I give life a chance and be positive about myself, I can succeed and be someone who is looked upon as a responsible and productive member of society. I get up in the morning and thank God. I now have a very positive outlook on life. I now have a GED® diploma!



**Irma**

**GED® Testing Center: Metropolitan Community College**

When I arrived in Omaha after having worked for many years in California in field work and agricultural packing plants, I found myself facing a problem. Many of the businesses where I applied for work required a GED® diploma and I did not have one. I had never attended a school in the United States. I had dedicated my life to working in order to support myself and my family. It was while I was walking down South 24th Street in Omaha, Nebraska that I happened to see the offices of NAF Multicultural Human Development Corporation. I registered for ESL classes there and later discovered that I also had the opportunity to study at NAF for my GED® diploma. Thanks to NAF and all of the personnel who helped me, I earned my GED® diploma. Now I have better employment and feel very happy for having acquired my GED® at the age of 59.



**Hillary**

**GED® Testing Center: South Sioux City**

I was home schooled for ten years. I utilized the Adult Basic Education center in South Sioux City, Nebraska before my senior year. The GED® program was extremely beneficial for me in several different ways. In fact, I would not be where I am today, without completing my GED®. After finishing with the testing, I had a wonderful sense of accomplishment. I wanted to continue my education. I used my GED® as a springboard to project me into the next level of learning. With the completion of the GED®, I was on my way to college. I chose South Dakota State University in Brookings, South Dakota for pre-dental. They accepted my GED® willingly and without hesitation. In order to be on any collegiate athletic team, a student needs to be cleared by the NCAA Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse checks each student's academic record. If the student's education is insufficient, they will not be cleared. I needed to be

cleared so that I could be on the equestrian team. They eagerly accepted my GED® credentials. This made the procedure with them much faster and smoother. I attended South Dakota State University and rode horses on the equestrian team at a Division I College. If I had not received my GED® diploma, none of these opportunities would have been possible. Thank you to everyone at the Adult Basic Education Center. You gave me a springboard that projected me in the right direction!



**Kim**

**GED® Testing Center: Central Community College – Grand Island**

My life has come full circle since I received my GED® diploma in 1981. In 1972, at the age of 17, I became a wife and a mother of a beautiful baby boy. I became overwhelmed with completing the last few credits I needed to graduate from high school in a new town. I always told myself I would be able to go back to school as soon as I “settled in” to my new life. Then, 15 months later, I gave birth to my second son. I was now a mother of an infant and a toddler and that high school diploma faded into the background. In 1979, my daughter was born. Always at the back of my mind was the reminder that I did not complete my high school education. I wanted a better life for myself and my family. Two years later in 1981, I decided to visit the Adult Basic Education office in hopes I would find out how to take the “test” to get my GED diploma. I took my first test in January of 1981 and did not take the next 4 tests until

October of 1981. I was overjoyed and felt a great sense of satisfaction and pride when I discovered that I passed the GED® tests! Completing the GED program and knowing that I now had earned my “high school diploma” gave me the courage and determination to better myself. In 1984, my husband and I divorced. I knew I needed a better job to support my children. I applied for a job as an Employment Representative at a local center and workshop for persons with disabilities. On the application, I could check the box that said, “YES, I AM A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE.” I was offered the job and accepted it.

Through the years, I also took the civil service test and started to work at the Social Security Administration, a job that was permanent, part-time and provided medical, vacation and sick leave benefits. In 1987, I applied for a full-time position with the USDA/ASCS office. I was employed in this position for 18 years. My job responsibilities included computer entry, writing and editing of various documents, reading and interpreting difficult handbooks, communication with co-workers and providing customer service. In December of 2005, I decided to retire from the USDA job. I wanted to do something different to help people and make a difference in someone’s life. Then, in February of 2006, I was hired as teacher-aide/desk clerk at the Adult Basic Education office in Grand Island. I truly love working at the ABE center. I understand the joy, determination and frustration of the Adult Basic Education students. My GED® certificate represents much more than a “diploma.” This diploma represents a milestone in my life that gave me the courage and self-confidence to develop and utilize my abilities. I am so thankful for this opportunity and encourage anyone to never give up! YOU CAN DO IT!!



**Guadalupe**

**GED® Testing Center: Crete Public Schools**

My name is Lupe Avelar; I am 39 years old, married with two wonderful children and a granddaughter. I moved from the big city of Los Angeles, California about 9 years ago, looking for a better future for my family. On July 10, 1997, I crossed the border into the State of Nebraska and as we drove into the state, I read the welcome sign that read “Welcome to the Nebraska, The Good Life.” The motto really caught my attention, not really realizing that it would become my own personal motto. After settling down in my apartment, I enrolled my daughter in school and went to the Blue River Family center to find out how much it would cost to have my son in their day care facility because I wanted to work and needed a day care for my son. At this point, I didn’t realize that I was walking into the door that would help me achieve a dream that was put aside for about 14 years.

I was offered to attend Adult Basic Education classes to receive my GED® and through the Even Start Program, I was offered free child care for my son. This was the opportunity of a lifetime! It was very important for me to receive a GED® because this way I could show my children that it doesn’t matter how long it takes to achieve your dreams, you should never give up. The dream that I thought was forgotten came back to life when I was given this great opportunity. I really believe deep in my heart that my children can see me as a positive role model and they know how important education is for our lives. Now I’m working as a translator and a kindergarten Para Educator for Crete Public Schools--the same district that gave me the opportunity to accomplish my dream. Thank you for providing these great programs for people like myself. I am living the “Good Life in Nebraska.”



**Maricela**

**GED® Testing Center: Crete Public Schools**

As a mother of two and a stay at home mom, I hadn't finished high school. I dropped out in 8th grade while living in Texas. I tried attending GED® classes in Texas, but never finished. Now I was living in Nebraska where my husband found a job at a meatpacking plant. The Crete Public Schools had just started an Even Start Program that joined an existing ABE/GED/ESL program and it offered childcare. I enrolled and because of the flexible hours, I was able to attend evenings, and later days, to complete my GED®. A short time after earning my GED® diploma, I was offered a job with Crete Schools in the Special Programs office where I have worked with Migrant Education for the past nine years. I am planning to open a small business in the near future. My husband, Marco, also benefited from this program. After learning English in the Adult ESL program at Crete, he was able to earn his GED® diploma also. In his current occupation, he has been able to apply the acquired knowledge from computers

and mathematics. Our children have seen the importance of education in the lives of our family and have set high goals for themselves. The oldest is in college and the youngest is in high school and hopes to be a drama teacher.



**Lynette**

**GED® Testing Center: Central Community College – Hastings**

I just got my High School Diploma at the age of 46. Twenty-seven years after dropping out of High School. (What a mistake dropping out was!!) I dropped out of school when I was 17. I got a job in a factory and worked there for a few years. I went to GED® classes then, but didn't stick with it and ended up quitting. I guess I wasn't motivated enough. I moved to Florida and then to Texas. I got married and had a little girl. I decided to try and get my GED® again. I went to classes for three months and did all the bookwork and tests. My teacher said I was ready to take the big test. I never did, though. My excuse this time: "No more money!" There was always an excuse. So for the next 15 years, I worked at low-paying, physical, hot jobs. Later, I got a divorce and moved back home to Nebraska. Then, I finally got a job that required me to get my GED®. I worked for six months on my practice tests and worksheets. There were times I thought I'd never get it done. If it wasn't for the help and encouragement of my Adult Education teacher, I really

don't think I would have stuck with it without her time and patience. Finally after this third try, I did it and graduated. If it wasn't for the classes, I don't think I would have done it. I'm really proud I did it. I encourage anyone who wants to get their GED® to do it and go to the classes, you will feel better about yourself, and you may possibly get better jobs. Go to the classes and do it, you'll be glad you did! Thank you very much.



**Karolinn**

**GED® Testing Center: Metropolitan Community College**

Ever since the fifth grade, I have known that I wanted to go to college. In fact, I don't think I can remember a time when that was not a dream of mine. It has always been a part of me. That is not to say that the pursuit of that dream has been easy, because it hasn't. There have been and still are several obstacles that I would rather not have to deal with, and there have been times I just couldn't see how I could make things work out. One of those obstacles is finances. My eight siblings and I were raised solely on my father's income; so asking my family to pay for my education (especially since I am looking to go beyond my Bachelor's degree) is out of the question. Because of my financial situation, my college options have become narrowed. Another obstacle was the fact that I was home schooled. I found out that many colleges had problems accepting my high school diploma because of that fact and because I graduated early – at the age

of sixteen. That is why I decided to take the GED® tests. I knew that it is nationally accepted as a high school equivalent and would broaden my options again. I still have obstacles and problems that remain unsolved, but people will tell you that I do not give up once my mind is set and my mind has been set on going to college as far back as I can remember. I am very grateful for the GED® program and how it has resolved one of the obstacles between myself and my dream of going to college – and one day teaching.



**John**

**GED® Testing Center: Western Nebraska Community College**

I was born in Fort Morgan, Colorado. When I was young, my parents decided to move to Nebraska; trying to find a better life after the depression of the thirties. Raised on the farm, I was forced to go to work to help maintain our family. There was very little time for play, except late in the evening with neighboring children. I attended school in the Gering School System through the ninth grade. Due to the fact that I was needed at home, I was unable to participate in any sports or activities at school. I then opted to drop out of school and got a steady job on the farm (at the age of 15). I continued in this endeavor until 1950, at which time I decided to join the United States Navy. In 1955, I received an Honorable Discharge with a rate of Second Class Builder, which was a branch of the Navy called "Sea Bees." At this point in time I started to realize that dropping out of school was a big mistake, because I had to study extra hard to achieve my rating. After my discharge, it seemed like farming wasn't a

good life and things were getting more complicated and there again the lack of good education was evident. At the age of 73, I decided to go for my diploma and enrolled in the GED® program at Western Nebraska Community College. I was honored to receive my diploma at the graduation ceremony, along with other much younger people. I chose to go into a different profession which required a diploma. Realizing now the need of a good education; I strongly recommend every young person to stay in school. If for some reason, you have dropped out, then by all means work toward a GED® credential. This could be a huge stepping stone to college and perhaps further education. I regard the staff, teachers and tutors at WNCC with highest respect. It was a most enjoyable experience. My only regret is that I waited so long to make this decision.