

## “Positive Action Creates Self-Esteem”...and Success



In just a few short months, Albany Housing Authority resident, Vernell Wilson has made enormous strides toward a self-sufficient future. It began when she visited the WAGE Center to inquire about tutoring services. But, a degree, a full-time job and an escrow account later, she is “hungry for more.”

Enrolled in an A.A.S. degree program at Hudson Valley Community College, Vernell had already dropped the Math 120 Statistics course twice before. Without passing the class, she wouldn’t be able to complete her degree. She says she was desperate when she asked Bill Paben about tutoring for the math course. What she encountered at the WAGE Center surprised her. She said, “[Bill] was interested in my making it...it was weird to me...I’m usually the one helping. But, he took the time...he pushed me.” She says, “I never thought that I could do it.” But, with Bill’s “reassuring and understanding” approach she passed the

course and got her degree in June, 2017.

“I was an early mother at 16. I dropped out of school. I had five kids.” She states that, “I was on drugs and alcohol...got my GED in jail.” It was at this point that she says she “started dreaming for my kids.” 30 years later she says, “I got back to school.” Now, she has a new full-time job in a human services setting working with adults in a community residence. Her pay will increase based on her newly acquired degree and training. Looking forward, she is considering a return to school to obtain her Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) Certification, for which she only requires an internship to complete.

In addition to her full-time job, Vernell has two part-time jobs as a Home Health Aide - a job she has done for 30 years. She says, “I consider myself a people person. It’s rewarding.” Because she is an Albany Housing Authority resident, she qualifies for, and has recently taken advantage of, the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program. It allows her to save money, based on increases in income, toward a five year goal plan.

She says, “One of my dreams is to own my own home, because I’ve been homeless.” She aspires to building credit and a healthy escrow fund to put toward “a family home for [her] children and grandchildren.” Making productive use of the many services available at the WAGE Center, Vernell says, “I don’t understand why more people don’t take advantage” of the opportunities available.

Vernell’s drive to succeed has been based on her feeling that “every accomplishment has built my self-esteem.” In the last couple of months, she has reached several significant goals and plans to continue to work toward the longer term goal of self-sufficiency for herself and for the long term security of her family. Vernell is a shining example of how effective use of resources can lead to measurable success.