



United Way California Capital Region – \$en\$e-Ability Program Success Story

I came into foster care at the age of fourteen, when I was kicked out of my adoptive placement. I had lived with that family my entire life until that point. I faced a great amount of physical abuse when I was younger and emotional abuse when I got older. As a result, I lashed out, became very suicidal, and began using drugs. I was forced to move out because of my drug use and defiance. However, looking back, it is clear that the problem was not me; I was the product of abusive parenting. It has taken a few years to kick bad habits and build characteristics like self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-motivation. It's been because of programs like United Way's Individualized Development Accounts (IDA) through their \$en\$e-Ability program that I have learned how to become more self-sufficient. The IDA is a savings training program with various workshops and also includes a bank account that was set up for me. Because of donations to United Way's \$en\$e-Ability program, I am able to receive a \$1:\$1 match as I deposit money and reach my goals in the program.

The IDA program and my AmeriCorps Case Manager are a large part of the reason I am who I want to be right now. It is because of his caring, persistence, support, and constant IDA workshops that I have been able to educate myself to be successful in saving and earning money and to be prepared to live on my own. Through IDA, I have met many people like college counselors and possible employers and have been able to network with his guidance and utilize services. He organized conferences on my behalf and advocated for me when I could not do so myself. He helped me in so many different ways; a few major things have been graduating and preparing to move out of the city. He helped me reach my full potential in school and kept me motivated not only with the incentives but with the idea that I was doing this for myself.

Had I not gotten into the IDA program and met my AmeriCorps Case Manager I would be a totally different person. I may have had the same goals but I would have had no idea how to accomplish them and would not have had the resources to do so. Had I not participated, I would not be a high school graduate today, I would not have the friends and family I made in the program, and I definitely would not have fully developed the skills to live by myself. I will be using my IDA savings to help pay for my tuition at Cabrillo College in Fall 2013 and to purchase a bike so I can get myself to class and my work study job. Without IDA, all of this would not be possible.

Through IDA, I have learned that I am a passionate person capable of accomplishing all the things that I see needing to be accomplished. I hope to serve my community, and I plan to attend Cabrillo College with a major in women's studies. I hope I can educate and counsel men, women, and children. I want to run for public office to reconstruct or put in place legislation for foster youth as well as inform the community about social issues. I am absolutely thankful to have been a part of such a great program with such influential people. They are the leaders I now model myself after.