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Linking Learning and Work

# Maturity in the Workplace:

Stories of Workers Aged 55+ on Their Journeys to  
New Work and Careers



October 2011



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## Stories of Workers Aged 55+ on Their Journeys to New Work and Careers

**D**emographic and other trends indicate that the U.S. will be seeing more mature workers actively engaged in the labor market, whether out of financial need or out of continued ability and preference. There are great benefits to employers from this workforce. These workers are part of the largest and fastest growing portion of the U.S. population, they have high levels of educational attainment, and they consistently show employers their value in terms of work ethic, loyalty, and reliability. Mature workers bring added value to the workplace through the accumulation of knowledge over time.

Many of these mature workers will need help navigating a complex labor market, identifying career pathway opportunities, and determining needed education and training to refresh their skills or prepare for different kinds of careers.

The Tapping Mature Talent (TMT) project supports regional and state efforts to develop and disseminate models to better utilize the knowledge, skills, and experience of mature workers. TMT is funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies and administered by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). Over a three-year period, CAEL is providing technical assistance, research, and opportunities for cross-site learning to ten sites selected and funded by the United States Department of Labor's Aging Worker Initiative (AWI). These sites are developing and implementing innovative models for serving mature workers and engaging local employers.

This publication profiles the stories of some of the mature workers who have participated in this initiative. Some have needed to upgrade their skills, some have pursued brand new careers in high-growth industries, some have worked hard to recover after layoffs and other hardships, and some have found themselves thriving as they pursue postsecondary degrees.

These stories show how much mature workers have to contribute to the workforce through their work ethic, experience, skills, and knowledge—and how eagerly they have embraced education and training so that they can contribute even more to our knowledge-based economy.

### The Ten Aging Worker Initiative Sites

- Tecumseh Area Partnership, Inc., Indiana
- Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc., Louisiana
- Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc., Maine
- Baltimore County Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development, Maryland
- Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board, Inc., Michigan
- South Central Workforce Investment Board, Pennsylvania
- Goodwill Industries of Houston, Inc., Texas
- Vermont Associates for Training and Development, Inc., Vermont
- Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council, Washington
- Fox Valley Workforce Development Board, Wisconsin

## Section1: Just a Little Refresher...

Mature jobseekers often have considerable skills and experience to offer prospective employers. Yet, many find that over time their skills need some updating. Archie Pinkney, Michael Hamilton, and Barbara Dixon all participated in training to refresh their skills and improve their employability.

### Learning the New Lingo



When Archie J. Pinkney lost his computer programming position with Microsoft in 2009, it wasn't the first time that the then-58-year-old had to go with the flow. A career-long computer programmer, Archie, who lives in Bellevue, Washington, had also been a victim of the dot-com bubble when he was laid off in 2001. At that time, as he watched the online world crumble around him, he decided to switch paths and return to school, where he studied to get his divinity degree and become a minister. By the time he received the four-year degree, the economy was on the brink of crumbling and churches weren't hiring, so he decided to return to the world of computers. "No one wanted to give me a chance," he recalls.

He managed to find contract work with Microsoft, but soon learned that, in just a short time, his programming skills had become obsolete. When his contract ended in 2009, he began applying for jobs again. He remembers being called in for an interview and not being able to understand the questions the interviewer was asking. It was like the interviewer was speaking in a foreign language.

**"The class...filled in a lot of the holes with the information that I didn't know."**

- Archie J. Pinkney, Taking an IT class to update his computer skills

"I couldn't figure out what he was talking about, and I was totally embarrassed," says Archie. "I just didn't have the lingo to communicate."

At the same time, he was struggling financially. He and his retired wife, Rose, were living off of her social security benefits, barely getting by. He knew that something had to give.

Then, one day, Archie came across an advertisement for a .NET class being offered at University of Washington. The class looked great—except that it cost \$2,400. Pinkney remembers looking at that price tag and thinking, "Like I have that kind of pocket change."

That's when a friend told Archie about the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County. Archie decided to check it out. He was put in touch with Employment Development Specialist Ginney To, who was able to get Archie into the class, thanks to grants from the Workforce Investment Act and the Department of Labor's Aging Worker Initiative's Reinvesting in Older Workers (ROW) project.

After enrolling in the class, Archie reports that it is exactly what he needed. "The fact that I took the class has already put me in a better position. It's filled in a lot of the holes with the information that I didn't know."

In fact, Archie is doing so well that his instructor has paired him up with other students, whom he's tutoring. In addition to his new confidence and knowledge, Archie has completed a couple of job interviews since the class began, and is confident that once he completes the course, a job will be waiting for him.

At 60 years old, Archie knows that many of his contemporaries are thinking about retirement. Not him. "My wife wants to eat and I need to provide a way for that," he says. "I need to work."

## When You're Not Ready To Retire



For Michael Hamilton, 65, being able to pick up and go in pursuit of a job has always been an appealing adventure. With his home base in southeast Michigan, Michael has worked in over 20 states, as well as Japan.

Mechanical design has always been in Michael's area of expertise and is the position that leads him to almost every corner of the United States. "I take work that is interesting, wherever I can find it!" exclaims Michael. "I love to go and actually see a place."

After being let go from his job at Freightliner Trucks in Oregon, Michael came back home to Michigan. He sought help in upgrading his job skills at his local MichiganWorks!

workforce development association, drawn in by skills upgrading opportunities and various programs specifically geared toward the 55+ age group.

At first, he had reservations about his ability to learn. "I hoped my mind was still nimble enough to learn something entirely and I discovered that it is. It's nice to know that I can still sit in a class," explains Michael.

Michael even discovered that he was useful to others just as much as they were beneficial to him. "Some of the kids needed help that I could supply, then I needed help that some of the kids could supply." Being in a classroom with significant age variation, Michael even learned that the young students had the same concerns or desires that he had 40 years ago.

This positive attitude is what helped Michael through 18 months of unemployment, during which he sent out over 150 resumes to prospective employers. "I had complete confidence that I would get a job eventually," he explains. "You just have to hang in there and keep plugging away at it."

Michael gives a lot of credit to the help he received from MichiganWorks! "It [the programs at MichiganWorks!] kept my spirits up, my morale up. Morale can be important when you are out of work for a long time. It's easy to give up," says Michael. "But you just have to upgrade your skills and learn to not give up."

Michael now works as a Mechanical Designer in the Research and Development department for Honda, just outside Raymond, Ohio.

Michael is fully aware that he is not ready to retire yet. "I still have a little life left in me...I'll never stop working."

**"I hoped my mind was still nimble enough to learn something entirely and I discovered that it is. It's nice to know that I can still sit in a class."**

– Michael Hamilton,  
Mechanical Designer at Honda

## Embracing the Digital Age

**“I’m enjoying spending time  
in the office.”**

– Barbara Dixon,  
Receptionist

Twelve years ago, Barbara Dixon took an early retirement from her job with Southeast Legal Services in Hammond, Louisiana. At age 55, she’d been with the company as an administrative assistant and intake specialist for 15 years, but she was having health problems and needed the time off to recover.

Fast-forward to 2010, when, at age 67, she was feeling healthy and strong. Mentally and physically, Barbara was ready to return to work. But the process turned out to be more challenging than she ever had expected. “It’s kind of hard for senior citizens to get job placement,” she says.

It was a tough decade to be away from a job. During her retirement, computers and the Internet had changed the workplace entirely. Google, LinkedIn, virtual offices, email—these were not things that Barbara had experienced before her early retirement. In her absence, technology had zoomed ahead, ultimately widening her employment gap even further. She applied for administrative job after administrative job, but had no luck.

Then, a friend told her about Quad SilverForce, a program operated by The Quad Area Community Action Agency and funded through a grant from the Department of Labor’s Aging Worker Initiative. Barbara signed up to take a computer course through SilverForce, hoping to update her skills. As she learned Microsoft Word and Excel, she began to get her confidence back. “It helped me a whole lot,” she says.

At the same time, she heard that SilverForce had a job opening for a receptionist. She applied, and was thrilled when she was hired for the job. She’s been working there part-time since May 2010. “I love it. It’s really nice working here. The atmosphere is nice. You get a chance to meet a lot of people,” she says.

She’s also continuing to learn. During her time working there, she’s taken another class, this time in advanced computer skills.

Having already experienced retirement, Barbara says her position with SilverForce is exactly where she wants to be. It’s the best of both worlds.

“Right now I’m enjoying spending time in the office and doing stuff,” she says. “It doesn’t feel like retirement but it doesn’t feel like working, either.”

### A Vermont Employer’s Story: When Part-Time is Just What You Need

Every year around tax time, public accountant Carol Tremble used to search for full-time front desk help from somebody in her South Hero, Vermont community. But then one year, she hired three mature workers who were each interested in a part-time position. With their varied skill sets and availability, Tremble says it’s made her job easier than ever.

“They know it’s a short period of time, and they don’t expect me to keep them busy with busywork,” says Tremble. “They’re all equally devoted.”

One of the women is a retired postal worker who wanted the chance to interact with people a few days a week. Another runs her own business, and enjoys this position for its supplemental income. The third works daily from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to make some money and keep busy.

Tremble says mature workers are dependable, experienced and need less direction and that this situation is a win for herself as well as her employees. She finds that they give her flexibility because they can also be available at other times of the year, if she ever needs additional help. She benefits from their dedication, expertise, and flexibility, and they benefit from the opportunity to work without being tied down to a full-time job.



## Section 2: Encore Career, Anyone?

After many years performing a job well, mature workers may find that they are wanting to do something very different in their 50s and 60s. They may want to find a job that is less stressful than the one they had before or they may find that the kind of work they did before is no longer available. Irene Jackson, Wilford Johnson, and Sue Sawotka all embraced the idea of an “encore career,” a new profession for this new stage in their lives.

### Building on A Lifetime of Skills and Knowledge

Between losing her husband to a brain tumor and going through her own breast cancer treatments, Irene Jackson, 65, of Maine has not been dealt an easy hand over the past six years.

Irene had been a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) nurse, but when her husband got sick, Irene stopped working in order to care for him.

“My husband and I had envisioned growing old together so between the two of us we would have enough money to do what we needed to do. Then he died early and it switched everything around for me, and I had to make other plans,” says Irene.

Upon her husband’s passing in 2005 and after her own cancer battle, Irene started looking for employment. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of the healthcare industry, Irene did not feel comfortable returning to work as a nurse after taking several years off, but she knew that her previous experiences would prepare her to work in a doctor’s office.

Through an advertisement for the Aging Workers Workshop (part of Maine’s Aging Worker Initiative-AWI), Irene was led to Stanley Targonski, an Aging Worker Initiative Navigator for Aroostook County in northern Maine. He encouraged Irene to enroll in the Maine On Line Learning Initiative (MOLLI) program to obtain her Medical Office Specialist training.

**“[After training], I feel more able to offer something to someone.”**

– Irene Jackson, recently completed Medical Office Specialist training

“It definitely took a lot of discipline to be able to do all the work,” she recalls. “There wasn’t a time limit or anything so I set one for myself and said, “You need to get this done.” Her positive view towards education may have contributed to her success. She believes, “You never stop learning as far as I’m concerned.”

Since finishing her training program, Irene is now focused on her job search with the help of AWI.

Irene is happy she went back to get her certification. “I’m glad I did go through the process, I feel more able to offer something to someone. And my nursing experience is not going to go away,” explains Irene.

## Finding Security



In 2005, Wilford Johnson put his life on hold. He was working in the marketing department of Xerox, in Dallas, when the company began downsizing. Around the same time, his mother passed away. His father, who lived in Houston, needed his help, so he accepted a voluntary layoff from Xerox and moved in with his father.

After six years of helping to put his father's life back in order,

Wilford, now 58, recently started focusing on his own. First and foremost, he needed a job. A friend told him that Goodwill was offering a program called the Aging Workers Initiative, which provides employment and career development services to displaced workers ages 55 and older. This friend had found a job through the program, and suggested that Goodwill could also be helpful to Wilford.

**"I needed a program like that because I didn't know where to go. I didn't know where to start looking."**

**– Wilford Johnson,  
Security Guard**

Wilford didn't hesitate. He enrolled in the program, and attended a class called Yes You Can. During the three-day class, he learned practical tips for finding a job and met with a number of people with similar experiences. He didn't realize

how badly he needed the support until he was in the thick of it.

"I found out how to get my confidence back up again," he says.

Soon after the class ended, Wilford attended a job fair that Goodwill hosted. There, he met with a recruiter from Allied Barton, and decided that a job as a security guard would be a good fit. He thought it would be a nice reprieve from the stressful positions he had held in finance and marketing fields in the past. He was hired the next day.

Wilford says he never could have done it without Goodwill. "I needed a program like that because I didn't know where to go. I didn't know where to start looking," he says.

In May, he passed the 90-day mark on his job, and says he loves it. He's making enough money to gradually replenish his retirement savings, and he has health insurance and other benefits.

"I wanted something less stressful, and it is less stressful. I just put on a uniform and look nice and conduct myself in a professional way," he says. "I'm having a whole lot of fun and I get to do all the things I want to do when I'm off of work."

## A Maine Employer's Story: Skilled Mentors for the Entering Workforce

In 2008, Cianbro Corporation, the largest construction company in Maine, needed nearly 300 skilled craft workers for a project. With the help of various community, education, and government partners, including the Maine Department of Labor, the company was able to successfully staff the project. The demographics of the workforce ranged from 18 to those over the age of 55. Many of the experienced Cianbro training staff are 55 or older as well.

Mature workers are, in fact, valued team members at the company; 34 percent of Cianbro's current staff is over the age of 50. In 2010 the Maine Jobs Council awarded Cianbro the Silver Collar Employer Award, recognizing its innovative practices regarding mature workers. In 2011, Cianbro was similarly recognized on the national stage as one of AARP's Best Employers for Workers Over 50.

"[Mature workers] provide some great experience and exposure to act as mentors to our younger people," says Steve Pound, Associate Director of Cianbro Institute/Workforce Development. He adds that the mentorship is not only for the technical positions in the company but also in developing our new leaders for our succession planning.

Pound explains that the success of the company depends on tapping the knowledge and expertise of the mature team members. "We are always looking at how can we maximize their experience and education while they continue to add value to our company. We think this approach will benefit each team member. It's as pure and simple as that."

## Nursing a Bright New Future



For 19 years, Sue Sawotka served as the office manager at Camp LuWiSoMo, a gorgeous, wooded, 420-acre Lutheran camp near her home in Wild Rose, Wisconsin. She planned on working there until she retired.

In 2009, the summer camp and retreat center fell victim to the economy, and closed. At age 54, Sue found herself without a job. For nearly six months, she searched for work. Finally, she found two different positions, working as a part-time cook at a different camp and conference center, while also working as a sales person in a thrift store. The pay was low—only \$8.50 an hour—and although she worked seven days a week, she was just barely getting by.

In 2011, a friend suggested that she seek help through the Fox Valley Workforce Development Board. There, she worked with Paths to Older Worker Employment Readiness (POWER) Grant Case Manager Jan Ristow to determine what career opportunities would best suit her.

For some time, Sue had thought about becoming a certified nursing assistant. She shared this with Ristow, and before she knew it, Ristow helped her apply for a POWER grant, which provides training and education to workers 55 and older to help them succeed in high-growth, high-demand industries. The grant paid for Sue's tuition, her books, uniforms, shoes and other needs.

**"I really love what I do."**

**– Sue Sawotka**

While she was still in school working towards her nursing certification, Sue was offered a job at Bethel Home, a nursing home in Oshkosh. "I started working in February of 2011," she says. "I've had two raises already and I'm up to the same amount of money I was making at the camp after 19 years."

Sue says she enjoys her job and the people she works with. Every day, she feels as though she's making a difference. "I just love taking care of people," she says. "I really love what I do."

These days, she no longer thinks about retirement. Instead, she's considering going back to school. She still has money she can use on her education from the grant, and is deciding whether she wants to apply the funds toward becoming a registered nurse (RN) or a licensed practical nurse (LPN).

"I feel like I've been given a whole new life," she says.

## Section 3: Rising Like the Phoenix

Mature individuals have experienced a lot of life, with lots of ups and downs. Many examples of loss are profiled in this publication—the loss of a home, the loss of a job, the loss of a spouse through death or divorce. It is inspiring to hear how so many have overcome feelings of despair through the pursuit of education or the embrace of a new profession. Becky Loyacano and Jo Mazza have both found new direction in their lives through new careers.

### Making a New Life

It started with Hurricane Katrina, when Becky Loyacano watched her hometown of New Orleans wash away. After the storm, she packed up what was left of her belongings and moved to Jacksonville, Florida, to be close to her daughter. She had no problem finding a job in retail, the industry she'd worked in most of her life.

In 2010, at age 55, she relocated again, this time to be close to her mother. She found herself in Kokomo, Indiana, a small Midwestern town hit hard by the recession. Finding a job here wasn't so easy. "It was a whole new experience for me to go out and find a job," says Becky. "I'd never been without a job in my life."

She realized early on that the retail industry was not an option—there were no openings for the retail management position she was searching for. So she created 12 different resumes, each touting a different area of expertise—public relations, marketing, retail, sales, human resources and more. Still, no luck.

As part of her search, she began attending as many professional networking functions as she could. That's how she discovered employment agency WorkOne, and the Tecumseh Area Partnership and its Aging Worker Initiative.

Becky was thrilled to hear there was such a program. She began participating in weekly "Career Transition Hub" meetings, which included everything from workshops to seminars to networking events. In the process, and with the help of the aging worker specialists at WorkOne, she began examining her skills and opening her mind to new and different career opportunities. It didn't take long to see that with her human resources skills, her management experience, her organizational skills and volunteerism, the healthcare industry would be a natural fit. She just needed some experience and technical training to put her on the right path.

**"I'd never been without a job in my life."**

– Becky Loyacano,  
Medical Practice Manager

The program helped Becky land a four-month internship at a neurologist's office, where she learned the ins and outs of a medical office. At the end of the internship, one of the doctors offered Becky a job as practice manager in a new practice. Around the same time, Becky received a grant from AWI to help pay for classes that would further expand her technical knowledge. By day, she works in the medical office, and by night she takes online

### An Indiana Employer's Story: Appreciating the Seasoned Worker

The Maturity Matters program through Tecumseh Area Partnership (TAP) has provided Schoolhouse Partners, LLC with several new part-time workers. Co-founder Anita Schafer says that she has been pleased with the quality of the candidates, especially those hired. "Some things are not easy to train, like pride in work, or satisfaction with a job well done. That would take years to train."

Schafer discovered that those kinds of characteristics have been hard to find in candidates who are younger and right out of school. "They have the degree but they don't have the seasoning." The more experienced workers impressed Schafer more.

TAP's internship option was also a great tool for the organization, providing a way for Schafer to assess a candidate's skills. Schafer says that this also benefitted the candidate. "It gives the candidates a chance to test this out themselves, too, to see if it's something they want to do."

Schoolhouse Partners has been a good fit for mature workers and their experience. Schafer proclaims, "It's a shame we can't hire more."

classes with Ivy Tech Community College, learning about medical terminology, medical billing and coding and more.

Becky says she has finally found the right place professionally. Though she's weathered a lot of changes over the past few years, she says that she loves her job and the feeling it gives her, in contrast to her previous work in retail, "I like to feel like I'm giving something back," she says.

## Recovering from the Shock of a Layoff

By the time she turned 60, Jo Mazza had worked in the banking industry for 25 years. She'd spent the last eight years working in a bank file library handling discharges of mortgages, filing, and doing anything else that came across her desk. "I was so proud to work at that bank," she recalls.

A resident of Milton, Vermont, Jo planned on doing that very job until she retired in six years, when she would be able to receive Social Security and other retirement benefits. Then, she was called into a meeting with a human resources representative. "The bank has outgrown you, Jo," she was told. "Technology has outgrown you." She was let go.

"There's no guarantee on anything anymore," she says. "I never, never would have thought this would have happened to me."

Jo began searching for another job. Eventually, she found her way to Vermont Associates for Training & Development, which helps workers ages 55 and older evaluate their skills, receive training and find jobs.

With the guidance of Vermont Associates, Jo took a test to find out what industry would be a good fit. After so many years in banking, she was pleasantly surprised to learn the answer: healthcare. Jo loved the idea of working in an industry where she could help people.

Vermont Associates helped Jo apply for grants that would pay for healthcare training. This fall she is attending St. Albans Community College to become a medical office technician. Funding from the Aging Workers Initiative will cover her courses, as well as her books. "It's very nice, because I can't afford that," says Jo.

Jo plans to continue her job search while she's receiving training. Whatever job she finds, she still plans on working until she's 66 and then retiring. When she retires, she says she'd like to spend her time volunteering at a local hospital. With the training she's getting now, she'll have the needed skills to continue giving back for as long as she's able.

**"There's no guarantee on anything anymore."**

– Jo Mazza, studying to be a medical office technician

## Section 4: Going for the Degree

One pervasive myth about mature individuals is that they do not want to learn new things. The truth is that when given the opportunity, many people 55 and older approach education and training with real gusto. Kevin Pitzer and Alta Reynolds both find themselves pursuing new postsecondary credentials, and are loving every minute of it. Passion for learning does not stop at 55.

### A New Passion for Learning



It's been an important year for Kevin Pitzer, 56, of Galveston, Indiana and his wife Nancy, 50. Both have enrolled in community college and are working towards their future together. It's a drastic change from two years ago, when Kevin found himself without a job.

In 2009, Kevin turned 55 and was forced to retire because of his age from the United States Air Force, where he had served as an aircraft mechanic for 34 years. He wasn't prepared for retirement, mentally, physically or financially. "We weren't quite ready for it," he says.

Kevin had no direction, and his pension didn't kick in for another five years. He went to WorkOne, a state-run employment agency administered by the Tecumseh Area Partnership, where he learned about the Older Worker Skills Network.

Kevin began attending Career Transition Hub networking meetings, where he connected with other people his age who were going through a similar transition. He also enrolled in the Build Me Keep Me computer training class. It was the first class he'd taken since graduating college in 1990.

In the class, Kevin learned how to build a computer. "I thoroughly enjoyed it," says Kevin. "I got to meet with people my age, do some networking, make new friends." It also gave him a taste for the IT industry, and he wanted more.

**"It's been good to help one another, and to learn from each other."**

– Kevin Pitzer, studying to get a degree in computer information technology

Soon after the class ended, Kevin learned that his Veterans Administration benefits would cover 30 months of classes, not only for him, but also for Nancy. Since their three children, ages 28, 26 and 21, were all out of the house, this would be a compelling reason to get *themselves* out of the house.

They enrolled at Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana. Kevin is working towards his degree in computer information technology, and Nancy is deciding her area of concentration. They often drive to school together, and they've even taken the same class. "It's been good to help one another, and to learn from each other," says Kevin.

Though he's considered "retired" by the Air Force, Kevin is energized by all the possibilities of his future, and Nancy's. "They say you're busier when you retire than you were when you're working, and it's true," he says. "But I'm not one who likes to sit around doing nothing. I like to keep busy."

## Not Old – Just Further Along on the Journey



Alta Reynolds, 60, of Baltimore, Maryland recently experienced what she refers to as her “own perfect storm.” All at the same time, she was forced to close her gift shop due to tough economic times, she divorced her husband, and her only daughter graduated from college and left home for good.

“Everything was gone,” says Alta. Left with no means of income, Alta had to find a new job.

“Much to my horror, I realized quickly that I was unemployable. Nobody wanted me, I was 59 years old. I could not even get a callback. I was horrified,” recalls Alta.

When she was finally given an interview for a sales position, she felt age discrimination firsthand when the interviewer said bluntly, “Who wouldn’t want to buy a vacuum from a grandma?” Alta was offended by this question. However, this experience made her more determined than ever to find a new and rewarding career.

After much searching, Alta learned of the training opportunities through the Maturity Works program at the Baltimore County Department of Economic Development. Now studying to be a surgical technician, Alta says school saved her life. She describes class as fascinating, tough, and “just beyond fun.” Although she jokingly calls herself the “class mom,” she tells the 20-year-olds in her classes that she is the same age as them inside her head.

**“The last thing in the world you think you’re going to do at 60 is go back to school and rebuild your life.”**

**-Alta Reynolds, studying to become a surgical technician**

“Growing up? Forget it! I’m just farther along on the journey,” explains Alta.

While she has faced several obstacles since losing her shop, Alta says that when it comes to obstacles, “You don’t let them deter you. You go over them, you go under them, you go around them or you blast that sucker out of the way. I don’t consider anything as a problem – I consider it merely a challenge to overcome.”

In nine months, Alta will graduate from college and start the next part of her life as a surgical technician. “I’ll actually get some letters at the end of my name now!” she exclaims.

Alta admits that going back to school was not part of her initial plan. “The last thing in the world you think you’re going to do at 60 is go back to school and rebuild your life.” But now that she’s enjoying her classes and has a brighter future ahead, she’s glad she did.

Alta smiles, “I’m doing very well in college. I’m looking at a future in about 9 or 10 months, a new career.”



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For more information about CAEL's Tapping Mature Talent Initiative, please contact Lisa Schumacher at 312.499.2337, [lschumacher@cael.org](mailto:lschumacher@cael.org).





# CAEL

**Linking Learning and Work**

We advocate and innovate on behalf of adult learners to increase access to education and economic security. We provide adults with career guidance and help them earn college credit for what they already know. We equip colleges and universities to attract, retain, and graduate more adult students. We provide employers with smart strategies for employee development. We build workforce organizations' capacity to connect worker skills to employer demands.

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