

LACIEY'S STORY: THE DIFFERENCE A YEAR CAN MAKE

At the beginning of 2019, Lacey Eidson had no idea how much her life would change in one year.

Her financial future looked bleak as she navigated life as a newly single parent on a part-time real estate income. One day, as she sat in an orientation for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), she experienced a moment of clarity in which she knew she would have to try something different to create a more stable future for herself and her 12-year-old daughter.

Lacey, 37, saw a brochure for an accelerated Information Technology program at the Community College of Aurora and immediately knew she could do it. She qualified for a grant from the Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) that covered her tuition. Still, she struggled under the chronic stress of her financial situation, and during her first semester, she failed a class.

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She was three months behind on her electricity bill and unsure how she would stay in school when her SWFI career coach connected her with Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH). Fueled by a grant from The Women's Foundation of Colorado WAGES program (Women Achieving Greater Economic Security), CCH provides vocational services for women who have experienced homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. It also provides other supports that are vital to women's success in job training programs. For Lacey, connecting with CCH meant a paid electricity bill, gas to get from Westminster to Aurora, and other essentials, such as updated registration tags for her car. Without these supports, "I wouldn't have been able to make it to school," acknowledges Lacey.

With a little bit of breathing room, Lacey rebounded with As and Bs the next semester and earned her CompTIA A+ certificate. CCH placed her in an IT internship at A2J Tech Store, where she earned minimum wage. She expected to gain critical web design experience, but never expected that she would ascend directly into a management position. In November 2019, just months after her internship began, A2J Tech Store offered Lacey full-time employment. She now supervises three part-time employees, soon to include an intern from CCH, whom she will mentor.

In addition to a raise, she now earns a percent of the company's monthly revenue.

"I never in a million years would have found this job if it wasn't for CCH" she says, smiling. Along with the perks of secure employment and a steady income, Lacey is grateful for continued growth opportunities. A2J has asked CCH for help providing Lacey with a career coach who can mentor her as she grows in IT. CCH has also signed her up for a coding training class and will be glad to help her with the cost of additional training/supportive needs. "Just because someone finds employment doesn't mean our relationship ends," said Victoria Johnson, vocational services manager at CCH. "We want to help our ladies continue their success."



Lacey with her A2J supervisor, Joseph.

In 2019, CCH provided several women with IT, construction, and pest-control training programs and supportive services. CCH has learned that supportive services are essential, especially for women, many of whom are starting over after traumatic experiences, including domestic violence.

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