



## Stories of lives transformed

Stephen Langel – Director of Development

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### **A single mother goes from homelessness to a career**

Tanya was 23 years old and homeless, raising her one-year-old daughter while living in her car or sleeping at friends' houses for more than a year because she had no money for a place of her own. She felt hopeless.

This began to change when she discovered NewBridge's healthcare workforce program. NewBridge "saved my life," Tanya says because she could not support herself and her daughter on minimum wage. "I needed a career, and I needed it now."

Still, she faced financial challenges. Despite NewBridge's training and job placement being free, Tanya needed to pay her bills and support her daughter. But, continuing to work while taking classes and caring for her young daughter took its toll. Tanya was so tired that she had trouble staying awake during class.

However, her teachers and classmates helped her, providing the support, the encouragement necessary to make it through to graduation. "We were a family. We all loved each other, looked out for each other, including bringing food when others didn't have it," Tanya says.

Tanya learned not only how to draw a patient's blood, but also how to be a professional, using the technical and interpersonal skills that NewBridge teaches. She continued to hone these skills during the externship NewBridge provides in partnership with Cleveland Clinic, MetroHealth, and University Hospitals. "I became one with the needle," Tanya says with a laugh.

Now, Tanya has a full-time job with benefits and an apartment. Even more importantly, she has more time for her daughter. As a result, her entire outlook changed.

After NewBridge, "I felt like I was going to be okay. I wasn't drowning anymore."

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### **A teacher helps a single mother believe in herself**

Ashley worked at a job that made her miserable. "I used to go home every day in tears, hoping that I would eventually have the courage to quit my job."

It was NewBridge, Ashley says, who helped give her the courage to quit that job and transform her life. However, her obstacles, unfortunately, did not end when she started classes. Not only did she struggle as a single mother of a two-year-old child, but her friends and family didn't support her. "I was

discouraged from attending classes, being told ‘this [program] wasn’t anything special and I was still going to be nothing but a statistic.’”

This abuse “took a huge toll on my mental and emotional state,” Ashley says. But, the supportive environment at NewBridge helped her build self-esteem and find the will to succeed.

“Luckily, I was blessed to have an amazing and supportive teacher like Mrs. Redus [Mrs. Greta Redus, NewBridge’s State-Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA) Coordinator and Instructor]. She was the reason I finished STNA training, and eventually attended nursing school. If it weren’t for her giving me the extra push, I would’ve never actually gone through with it.”

Day after day, Mrs. Redus and Ashley sat together after class, discussing her concerns and doubts, as Mrs. Redus encouraged her. “She never judged me. She always told me that she saw so much potential in me, and that’s exactly what I needed to hear at the current place I was in my life.” Other NewBridge staff helped support her as well, including career readiness specialists who helped Ashley prepare for a career and staff who helped her secure employment.

This made all the difference for Ashley. “I honestly feel like it was a blessing in disguise to attend NewBridge because if it weren’t for the amazing faculty and support system that lies within this building, I would not be where I am today.”

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### **A young woman breaks the cycle of abuse and self-doubt**

For Mina, NewBridge Cleveland was essential to believe in herself for the first time, which helped her end a cycle of abuse that had left her feeling worthless.

Mina wanted to be a nurse ever since she was a child. She realized this was her dream when she took care of her mother when she was ill. But, when her mother died, her father took custody and told her time and again that she was worthless. Her suffering continued when she entered into an abusive marriage.

She eventually got out of her father’s house and free from her abusive marriage. But she still couldn’t find success due, in part, to her crushing self-doubt. For example, she entered school but never finished. She did not believe she could succeed.

This changed when she came to NewBridge as her pharmacy technician teacher helped her see that she was worthy and could be successful. Mina began to believe in herself. She is now getting good grades in class and is on the way to realizing her dream of becoming a nurse.

“I now feel good about myself. I’ve been through hell and back, and I’m okay because of NewBridge.”

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