

# SUCCESS

TANF Stories from Across Arkansas



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families  
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services



**DEPARTMENT OF  
WORKFORCE SERVICES**  
JOBS FOR PEOPLE. PEOPLE FOR JOBS.

# Introduction

**The Arkansas** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program tells a story of helping families move into the workforce and of reinvesting in their communities. Our dedicated staff and partners have successfully helped thousands of Arkansas families:

1. **End dependency on cash assistance under Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA);**
2. **Receive transitional support while moving into the labor market with a variety of supportive services made available through the Work Pays program and the Career Pathways Initiative;**
3. **Achieve self-sufficiency through gainful employment, individual skills development, and family services.**

**The Work** Pays program, Career Pathways Initiative, and the Individual Development Account (IDA) program have each been a definitive component of this success because they focus specifically on providing people with the help they need to stay off public assistance and assume personal responsibility. These approaches stimulate greater community involvement and collaboration at the local level of many public and private community-based organizations, including schools, local employers, social service agencies, faith-based organizations and court systems. These efforts promote services that are more effective because they are locally based, more integrated, and designed around family needs.

**The satisfaction** of observing direct success among our clients and community as a result of our TANF program efforts is most gratifying. These successes take many forms and may focus on a single individual, group, or larger population. However, the underlying theme in any success story is the positive impact on an individual or society that occurs as a result of our program efforts.

**The dictionary** defines success as "... favorable termination of a venture...the degree or measure of attaining a desired end...an undertaking that succeeds or confers success...succeeding fully or in accordance with one's desires" (Babcock, 1993). This publication examines issues facing the TANF program in our efforts to meet the needs of participants in innovative ways. It shares the inspiring success stories and true life accounts of TANF clients receiving help from TANF staff and our partners throughout the great State of Arkansas.

**Arkansas TANF** salutes all the TANF participants and case managers, supervisors, administrative staff, and managers, especially those featured in this inaugural issue of *Success: TANF Stories from Across Arkansas*. We appreciate our many partnerships, particularly with Southern Bancorp, Inc., for their support and the great work on behalf of low-income Arkansans throughout our great state.

# Racquel Green

Little Rock Workforce Center

*Pulaski County*

## *TEA – Work Experience (WEX) – On-the-Job-Training (OJT) – Work Pays*

Even though there is no such thing as a typical TEA participant, Racquel Green would not stand out to anyone as a likely candidate. She was highly driven to achieve grand aspirations, and anyone who knew her was sure she would make it. That's not the type person who generally signs up for an assistance program.

She says TEA offered a Plan B for her life just as challenging and exciting, and perhaps even more fulfilling, than the Plan A on which she had focused. "If not for the TEA program, I might still be stagnant," says the New Orleans native who moved to Little Rock in 2001

Racquel had earned a Medical Assistant certificate and returned to school at Pulaski Technical College. She was doing so well in her classes she was asked to tutor other students in the Network for Student Success, a program affiliated with Career Pathways.

Ms. Green participated in a Work Experience (WEX) assignment. She helped coordinate the annual Community Health Fair, which allowed her to explore her interest in medicine, and also develop hidden natural talents in marketing and public relations. That assignment ended, but her experience opened the door to new employment at a daycare facility where she was taking her children, Little Scholars Learning Center. School Director, Edman Sipe says Racquel has a unique way with babies. "Any time a child is awake, we try to stimulate their minds," Sipe says. The Center now has her working on marketing, grant identification, grant writing, and procuring new financial partners at a time of shrinking voucher dollars.

How many of those talents would she have unearthed if not for conscientious TEA case workers? "All of my workers saw something different in me that I couldn't see," Racquel says. "When you have people that will lift you up and promote you, it means a lot." That's important even for someone already driven to achieve. Ms. Green is now enrolled in Work Pays.

# Ronnie Jones

Paragould Workforce Center

*Greene County*

*TEA – Work Experience (WEX)*

Mr. Ronnie Jones relocated to Arkansas from Iowa. He was out of a job and needed help for his family of two daughters (13 and 18 years of age). He needed a place to stay. Although, Mr. Jones had a family vehicle, there were times when he needed transportation services to assist him in getting to his work activities. His only vehicle needed repairs, and he is currently getting repair estimates.

Mr. Jones only completed the 9th grade and, he earned his GED through the Arkansas Northeastern College Adult Education Center. He was referred to the job skills Program, TOOLS, and completed Key Train and Work Keys, earning Silver status. After obtaining his CRC (Career Readiness Certification), he was referred to Black River Technical college for orientation with American Railcar (ARI). He completed orientation and training in welding. He is currently on the waiting list to be hired. Mr. Jones is currently in WEX and works with the instructors in the TOOLS program. Staff at Arkansas Northeastern College encouraged Mr. Jones to get a haircut and shave, and they got him some appropriate clothing.

Mr. Jones has since been hired at Lowes and is going through their orientation. He says that he likes working at Lowes. He came into the office when he started his new job, and he was beaming. He was wearing a new pair of jeans and new shoes. Mr. Jones is happy about his new job and being able to bring in a paycheck. He hopes to have a home of their own for him and his girls.

# Lerrica Ball

Benton Workforce Center

*Saline County*

*TEA – AJS – Work Experience (WEX) – Work Pays*

Lerrica Ball, mother of four young children, began her TANF experience in August, 2012. She started in Assisted Job Services (AJS), but her significant barriers, including childcare, transportation, and a lack of job skills did not allow for success. About five weeks later she began Work Experience (WEX) where she developed a passion for helping ADWS customers in the self-service computer lab. She also developed a great attitude toward work and considerable customer service skills, enhanced by her focus on serving customer needs. Her TEA case manager encouraged Ms. Ball to remember her dreams for her children and herself. Ms. Ball took on more work experience activities in the local ADWS office and showed a strong desire to perform well. As she worked and learned at the Center, Ms. Ball became more receptive and positive about TANF case management and its potential impact on her life and her children. Through many interactions with TANF staff, Ms. Ball's self-esteem improved, and she was determined to become employed.

Her case manager referred Ms. Ball to a convenience store job within walking distance of her home. She needed a way to take her youngest three children to daycare while she worked, so she asked an aunt to help. The aunt agreed, provided that Ms. Ball would keep her job. Starting with 24 hours a week, she kept the job and transitioned to the Work Pays Program in November, 2012.

She was so encouraged that she asked for more hours. Her case manager helped her develop new goals. Her short-term goals were to get a driver's license and buy a personal vehicle. She got her license and, through the TANF Extended Supportive Services vehicle down-payment assistance procedure, she bought a minivan. Her long-term goals were for more work hours, to become a manager, and to get a GED and a college degree. She reached two of these goals. She now works 40 hours a week and serves as a night manager on Sundays and Mondays. Keeping her job brought more family support. Her family now cares for her four children while she works on the weekends, and the children attend church regularly. Ms. Ball's willingness to take action and her positive attitude toward work, assisted by the TANF Program, is moving her move steadily toward self-sufficiency.

# Trisha Webb

Paragould Workforce Center

*Greene County*

*TEA – Work Experience (WEX)*

Trisha Webb is a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) who lost a previous job due to health issues. Ms. Webb was unable to do the heavy lifting, which normally is a requirement when working at nursing homes. Ms. Webb realized that she may need to change professions and obtain skills and training in clerical work. Ms. Webb is a single mother with a child, and who is experiencing barriers with child care and being under-employed.

Ms. Webb completed the job skills program at Arkansas Northeastern College, and also completed the Career Pathways and Work Experience (WEX) Programs at Chateau on the Ridge and LifeHouse Ministries.

During Ms. Webb's first month, she was assigned to the Chateau on the Ridge as the receptionist to gain work experience. Ms. Webb was then placed in the JCB program at Arkansas Northeastern College where she completed the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC), gained more computer skills, completed her resume, acquired job interviewing skills, completed the compass tests, and researched other areas of education to assist her in her future work activities. Ms. Webb still has a strong desire to stay in nursing and keep searching for work with lighter duties.

Ms. Webb was successful in obtaining a position as a CNA working 35-40 hours per week. She has since been approved and accepted into the Work Pays Program.

# Carl & Callie Scott

Hot Springs Workforce Center

*Garland County*

*TEA – Two-Parent Household – Work Pays*

The Scott family transferred to the Hot Springs DWS office from Pine Bluff. Their case was sanctioned at the time and, with assistance of Case Manager Dean Gould, the family used the child care assistance voucher through the TANF Program and got motivated. Callie quickly satisfied the sanction and became employed with Accent Marketing Services. She began training for the Engagement Specialist position.

Carl had a medical condition that needed attention, but he persevered in working a job to meet the hours needed to stay in the program. Callie completed her training and excelled in her role with Accent. Carl accepted a position with Accent in March 2012 and began his training program. Upon completion, Carl began contributing hours much like Callie toward their participation in Work Pays.

The couple soon began meeting their goals in the Work Pays program by receiving incentive bonuses totaling \$2,200.00. As their income increased through employment and performance bonuses with Accent Marketing Services, they ultimately exceeded the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for their household size. The family has now reached the goal of self-reliance, and can provide more for their child, Alexis, all with the supportive services of TEA and Work Pays.

Both Carl and Callie plan to continue their education and pursue careers in the medical field.

# Kacey Kirchner

Little Rock Workforce Center

*Pulaski County*

*Job Placement Pilot Project (Lewis-Burnett Employment Finders)*

Twenty-one-year-old Kacey Kirchner has lived well beyond her chronological age. “I feel about 35 sometimes,” is the way she puts it because of a rough upbringing and circumstance that forced her to grow up early. But that background makes her perfect for her new role with Lewis-Burnett Employment Finders.

Kirchner was one of the first TEA participants referred to Lewis-Burnett under a pilot agreement with DWS for the Little Rock TANF office. Executive Director Darlene Lewis saw rare potential in the young mother of three. “She just jumped out at us,” Ms. Lewis says. “We needed her. We were willing to take a cut in order to add her.” What the staff saw was a genuine empathy for the people Lewis-Burnett specializes in helping. When Kirchner was eleven, her older sister was totally paralyzed in a car wreck. The Medicaid nurses assigned to provide in-home care weren’t always reliable, so her mother did that while Kacey babysat her sister’s 18-month-old son. Her sister developed pneumonia, and a then-13-year-old Kacey watched her die.

Her mom turned to methamphetamine to cope with the loss, and Kacey turned wild. Grief counseling didn’t seem to help. She went from straight A’s to flunking out of middle school and being kicked out of alternative school. “I was living kind of as an adult, even though I was a child,” she recalls, “and I ended up pregnant with my first child at the age of 16.” She now listens with an understanding ear as others tell similar stories at Lewis-Burnett in a connection that came through her participation in the TEA program. At age 20—after giving birth to a second child—she first applied for TEA. Within months, her case closed due to employment at Dollar General Store. That job didn’t last, and less than a year later, she re-applied. Workforce Specialist David Wallace referred her to Lewis-Burnett for help with her job search, but it was in the office that she found her calling. “It makes my heart feel whole helping other people,” Kirchner says. “A lot of times it gets discouraging looking for a job, and it brings you down when you’re already down. I can help them motivationally; I can refer them to jobs; I can just give them someone to talk to because I’ve been there.”

David Jones, Jr.

Little Rock Workforce Center

*Pulaski County*

*Job Placement Pilot Project (Lewis-Burnett Employment Finders)*

As a father, David Jones, Jr., went from zero-to-60 in an instant, with no warning. Even though he had fathered four children, parenthood wasn't an everyday part of his life until it was suddenly foisted upon him in October 2012. The mother of his twin two-year-olds dropped them off for what was supposed to be a three-week stay. The weeks became months, and "eventually I caught on that she didn't want to have them anymore," he says.

Jones had already gone about a year without a job, so what was he going to do now? The twins couldn't go to their special pre-school program because they had no clothes. They had some health concerns but no health insurance. "I didn't know men could sign up for TEA until my Dad told me," says the 24-year-old high school graduate. "He was telling me a man can step up just like a woman can to take care of their kids."

Workforce Specialist David Wallace referred him to Lewis-Burnett Employment Finders as part of a pilot partnership with the agency to assist job-seekers. "I was impressed that he was so respectful and listened well to all the information I was giving him about how the (TEA) program works," Wallace says. "He was highly motivated to find work, so I thought he

would do well over there." At Lewis-Burnett, Jones was able to completely revamp his resume. The staff there supplied him with a steady stream of job openings, and helped him take care of a child-support issue so that he could get his driver's license. They showed him how to register for college, and he was accepted into Pulaski Technical College. But their primary service was job-search assistance, and within four weeks he landed a fulltime job at Wal-Mart as an Inventory Control Specialist, unloading trucks and stocking shelves.

That seemed to change his whole life. "Jobs motivate," says Lewis-Burnett Director Leta Anthony, the project manager for the pilot program with DWS-TANF. "Once he obtained employment, he wanted to get every aspect of his life right." David's shift doesn't end until 1:00 A.M., so TEA transportation support was vital. Mr. Wallace guided him through the process for requesting vehicle-down payment assistance so he can keep his job. He is currently obtaining a 2005 Chevrolet Aveo. Assistance is \$2,500, plus the first six months of insurance, state sales tax, and license tag fees. Jones now has the means to provide his children the clothes and medical care they need. After more than a year of getting nowhere in his job search, he has found stability in his life. "Every since I found TEA and Lewis-Burnett, it's been a miracle."

# Zandra Geddis

Little Rock Workforce Center

*Pulaski County*

*Job Placement Pilot Project (Lewis-Burnett Employment Finders)*

Zandra says it was her single mother, who earned a master degree in business while raising her and serving in the Air Force Reserves, who made the biggest impression on her. When Zandra's road took a detour, it took some time—and the help of the TEA program—to regroup. After moving from South Carolina to Little Rock so her small child could be closer to her father, she went through a period of homelessness as the father turned out to be a poor provider. “Before I got here, he got into trouble, and he’s been in jail since then,” Ms. Geddis recalls. But even as a 19-year-old away from home, she pulled herself up, landed a job, and then a better one at Verizon Wireless and moved with her daughter into a three-bedroom apartment.

Then, Verizon laid her off. That misfortune was compounded by an instance of poor judgment that got her in trouble with the law. “I got caught up with some bad friends,” she admits. “Basically, I got caught, and they didn’t.” The result was a misdemeanor charge that complicated her job search.

“I had always known about TEA,” but she had resisted applying. “I’m more of a do-it-yourself type of person,” she says. But she found her misdemeanor prevented her from entering certain fields of work, and she needed help.

“She had very low self-esteem when she first came in,” says Workforce Specialist Brittany Blanton. “I said somebody is going to look at the positives and the good qualities you bring to the table and overlook the rest.” Ms. Geddis appreciated the concern. “Some caseworkers are too businesslike. (Ms. Blanton) was more about connecting with me and seeing what fits with me, and that’s what I liked about her.” Blanton referred Ms. Geddis to Lewis-Burnett Employment Finders for Assisted Job Search, and the staff there saw the good qualities Ms. Blanton had seen. “She listened, she took notes when she was in class, and she took it in,” recalls Lewis-Burnett Executive Director Darlene Lewis. “She has that bubbling personality, and she’s a real people-person.”

Soon, Zandra found work with ABC Financial, a soft collections firm. She’s able to work fulltime from home, which helps because a wreck in March totaled her car. She is working with Ms. Blanton to remedy her transportation woes and expects to move on to Work Pays assistance shortly.

# Danielle Reynolds

Mountain Home Workforce Center

*Baxter County*

*TEA – Work Pays – On-the-Job Training (OJT)*

Danielle was approved for TEA in March of 2011. She had little work experience, no GED, and needed to provide for two minor children. One of her children has major medical issues. She was referred to Children's Medical Services for help with her child's medical condition and needs. She lived with her mother and used her mother's vehicle. She was willing to accept any employment to be able to provide for her children, but she stated that she loves animals and would like to pursue a related career.

She was assigned to Arkansas Job Search (AJS) and within two weeks, she found a job at Wal-Mart. It was not what she had hoped for, but she was grateful for the opportunity. She was an excellent employee for Wal-Mart, but she still wanted to pursue her dream of working with animals. Her TEA case closed for employment, and she was eligible for Work Pays. She worked for Wal-Mart for a year. When she visited the DWS office to turn in her pay stubs, she continued to talk with TANF staff about her dream, but there were no jobs open in that field.

The TEA staff heard that the local Humane Society could not find employees to work in the shelter. DWS had listed the job in Arkansas Job Link (AJL) and sent prospective participants there, but none had lasted more than a week or two. The TEA staff thought that if they partnered with the shelter to train someone, they could retain new employees.

The TEA staff met with the shelter director hoping to set up an OJT (on-the-job-training) site for future TEA clients. The director said that the shelter was looking for someone who wanted a career with them. They needed someone willing to learn animal science, an extensive program with a great deal of study, implementation of learned skills, and testing. This is a requirement of employment. This is not an entry-level position. Right away the TEA staff knew they had the perfect applicant in their former TEA client. This wouldn't be an OJT contract, but a job retention follow-up for a fully paid job with this employer, so the TEA staff arranged for an interview for Danielle. She was hired and remains there a year later. She has studied and passed multiple exams and has received several promotions and raises. She is currently in training to become the assistant shelter manager. Danielle is supporting her family doing something she loves.

Danielle did not need monetary TEA supportive services, but ongoing case management services helped her get the career of her dreams and provided an excellent employee for the shelter.

# Amanda Fletcher

Mountain Home Workforce Center

*Baxter County*

TEA – Work Pays – Work Experience (WEX) – On-the-Job Training (OJT)

Amanda recently married and lives with her husband and two children in an unsubsidized home in Baxter County. Both she and her husband work to provide for their new family. She participates in the Work Pays program now and has attained her 3- and 6-month bonuses. She purchased a vehicle without assistance, found housing, and is working in the hospitality industry. With the support of the TANF Program, this family is thriving and moving closer to self-sufficiency each day.

She has accomplished much since arriving in Baxter County in 2011. Her TEA case was previously closed four times due to sanction, her children had been placed in foster care, and she was admitted to a substance abuse rehabilitation center. Amanda arrived in Mountain Home and applied for TEA as a resident of the substance abuse treatment center. She had no transportation, no family support, no friends in the area, and knew no one in town. She was on her own but realized she could not return to the life she had led. She wanted to make Mountain Home her new home and create a better life for herself and her children. She committed to change. She and the compliance officer discussed her sanction and how she could work to not let this happen again. With help, she cured the sanction.

Amanda attended a Work Experience (WEX) site and looked for employment while attending required classes at the treatment center. She wanted to work in hospitality, so the TANF staff contacted employer partners to discuss an on-the-job training (OJT) partnership and arranged an interview at a local hotel. The employer decided to skip the OJT reimbursement. They saw potential in Amanda and hired her.

With no public transportation, Amanda walked everywhere. Within two months she cured her sanction, completed her treatment, moved into a shelter for abused women, and found employment. TANF provided daycare assistance for Amanda's children, allowing her to participate and accomplish her goals. While at the shelter, Amanda walked two miles to work each day. She applied for HUD assistance to move her children into a home. She never complained. Her wonderful smile and spirit still light up the office each time she comes to see her case worker. Amanda had no family or friends nearby, but TANF staff provided the support to attain her goals. TANF financial and supportive services with guidance and support are crucial to the success of TANF clients. When she met her future husband, who was unemployed, she brought him to the DWS office and said "These women will find you a job." The staff made some calls and set up an interview for him. Within four days he was employed fulltime and six months later, he remains employed.

Amanda and her family are thriving. Her hard work and determination with the support, guidance, and assistance of the TANF Program helped her become responsible for her own support and less dependent on public assistance.

# Jessica Scherer

Mountain Home Workforce Center

*Baxter County*

*TEA – Work Pays*

Jessica came to Mountain Home from Jonesboro in Oct 2012 and voluntarily admitted herself to the substance abuse rehabilitation facility here. She had some felony convictions and had relapsed into substance abuse. She avoided having her child placed in foster care by admitting herself for services. Jessica was ready to start a new life in Mountain Home away from the people and things that got her into trouble. She had no family or friends here, but she knew this change was necessary for her and her child.

Her case manager worked with the rehabilitation center to allow Jessica to complete her required classes at the facility while looking for a job 20 hours a week. Within a month she completed her rehabilitation and found work. TANF assisted her with child care supportive services. Jessica admits that she found her job because her case worker required her to look for work 20 hours per week.

With no place to live when she was discharged, Jessica applied to the local women's shelter for her and her child. She moved into the temporary shelter, returned to Jonesboro to get her vehicle, and started work the following Monday. Jessica took one step at a time, moving toward self sufficiency. She knew it wouldn't happen overnight, but she was sticking to her plan.

She began saving her money to move into a home of her own. Her TEA case closed for employment, and she set aside her bonuses for rent. When Jessica heard about FICASSO (Families in Crisis Accessing Services, Support, and Opportunities), she applied and was approved. Because she had not been off of probation for two years, the apartment complexes wouldn't accept her. Jessica kept working and saving money. She finally found someone willing to work with her and FICASSO. Now, instead of an apartment, she has a home with a yard. She has enough work hours per week for the Work Pays program, and she has applied. Four months after arriving in Mountain Home, Jessica completed her rehabilitation. She will be off probation soon, loves her job, has been working for four months, and her employer increases her hours each week. She moved into her new home with her child and is seeking help with ongoing rent expenses from HUD.

Through the cooperative efforts of Jessica, the TANF staff, the rehabilitation facility, the women's shelter, her employer, the FICASSO program, and HUD, Jessica was empowered to become self-sufficient. She is meeting her needs and also contributing to the local economy. Together, we make families stronger.

# Justin Kizer & Laura Dunson

Malvern Workforce Center

*Garland County*

*Two-Parent Work Pays*

As a new Work Pays case manager in March of 2011, my assessment with Laura Dunson was among the first that introduced me to the TEA program. Our assessment took place in the stock room of O'Reilly Auto Parts in Malvern. Among a mostly male workforce, surrounded by the smell of engine oil, Laura initially stood out in this setting. After speaking with her, I learned that she was completely comfortable in this male-dominated industry. She could work the front counter to assist customers to find the right part and make deliveries to local mechanic shops. Known to most by her nickname Lindie, her vibrant smile, positivity, vast knowledge, and friendly disposition were among her outstanding qualities in this customer service driven job.

Soon Lindie began earning raises and became eligible for Work Pays bonuses. Through the Division of Child Care, she received a voucher to pay for daughter Ryleigh's care while maintaining a busy work schedule as a single mom. Just when things were looking up, the vehicle she depended on for her commute to work and daycare was struck by a deer and badly damaged. The cost of repair exceeded its value; so the next step was to request vehicle down payment assistance.

She used proceeds from her wrecked vehicle to assist in the down payment for a Toyota Corolla. Lindie paid her vehicle insurance, and she requested Extended Supportive Services through Work Pays and was approved for the down payment and payment for the vehicle sales tax and tags. In June of 2011, she moved from Malvern to Hot Springs to make a home and start a family with fiancé Justin Kizer. Lindie and Justin are now the proud parents of a baby girl, Adelyn. Their hope is to be married. Justin was recently promoted to Maintenance Supervisor of Lakewood Convalescent Home in Hot Springs. Together they have been able to create a better life, providing a nice home on Lake Hamilton to raise the girls. Gradually, each type of assistance they once needed has come to a close. At first this was a scary prospect for Lindie, but with encouragement, she now sees the benefits. Their combined income recently resulted in closure of the Work Pays case due to exceeding the FPL (Federal Poverty Level). Through the determination and strength of this family, they've reached a goal of self reliance that is an inspiration for the work this program aims to do every day. As a case manager, I'm proud to have taken part in their journey to self-sufficiency.

When asked what she had to say about the Work Pays program and the time she has participated in it, she stated, "Many people look down on assistance programs. I'm thankful for it and don't feel that I would be where I am today if not for this program. It truly helped and it's nothing to be ashamed of."

# Amber Norberg

Mountain Home Workforce Center

*Baxter County*

TEA – Work Experience (WEX) – On-the-Job Training (OJT) – Work Pays

Amber Norberg was approved for TEA assistance in August of 2012. She had little work experience, which consisted of short-term employment in the fast-food industry. She wanted a career in child care, but she had no experience.

While Amber was assigned to job search, she completed her resume at the DWS office and was told to apply at all the local day care facilities. The Mountain Home TANF staff contacted a local employer, a partner, to discuss a possible WEX or OJT assignment. They secured an interview for Amber. The employer saw potential in Amber and realized she would need training. Amber was assigned to WEX at the day care facility to determine whether this would be a good fit for both her and the facility. The TANF Program arranged child care for Amber's infant so Amber could attend her WEX site. The employer partner decided they would train Amber through the TANF OJT program.

Amber is currently a full-time employee at a local day care facility, Open Arms Learning Center with full medical benefits for herself. She intends to pursue additional education and certification in child care with the intention of making it her career.

Open Arms Learning Center is currently one of the Employer Partners with the On-the-Job Training Program. Owner Jill Williams trained Amber through the OJT Program and hired her full-time after only three months.

Upon completing the three-month training, the employer hired Amber as a fulltime employee. She has been employed for two and a half months, with benefits for herself. Now she also participates in Work Pays. Her employer has only wonderful things to say about Amber's performance. This is a success for Amber and also for her employer and the local community. The employer now has a fully-trained and exceptional employee because of the TANF OJT program support. Now Amber has income that allows her to put money back into the local community, stimulating the economy. Amber is moving toward self sufficiency with her fulltime job and health insurance from her employer.

Amber is on her way to a career in child care. Her goal is to become a director at a childcare facility.

# Samantha Williams

Mountain Home Workforce Center

*Baxter County*

TEA – Work Pays

No photo  
available

Samantha is a veteran who came to the DWS office during the first quarter of 2011. She was seen and referred to jobs by a Workforce Specialist, not a Local Veteran's Employment Representative (LVER), and placed into a job. After losing that job, finding work through AID Temp Agency, and subsequently losing that job too, Samantha called and was referred to the new Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) who met with her, interviewed her, and completed an assessment.

During that process the LVER and Samantha determined that in both cases of losing her job, the issue was being late for work several times. Upon digging a little deeper, they realized that the underlying problem was a lack of reliable child care. Samantha is a single mother. The LVER asked the TEA Workforce Specialist and TANF Compliance Officer in the local office whether they knew of a process to help with child care arrangements. Since Samantha was unemployed at the time with a small child, she was eligible for TEA assistance. She applied and was approved. She was assessed, assigned to job search and with the assistance of child care Supportive Services, she found employment.

Samantha met her goals; she found employment within 30 days. The TEA case was closed for employment, while Extended Supportive Services child care continued, and Samantha is currently working fulltime. She is now participating in the Work Pays program and has been employed for over 18 months. She has an apartment and is able to meet the financial needs of her family. Employer contacts for placement follow-up indicate that Samantha is doing well, is reliable, and is well liked. Samantha is working six days each week and anticipating long-term employment.

The cooperative effort of the LVER with TEA and Work Pays staff played a significant role in helping this young single mother and veteran find productive employment. One supportive service provided through the TANF Program turned the tide for this mother and her daughter.

# Christie Shields

Paragould Workforce Center

*Greene County*

TEA – Work Experience (WEX)

When Ms. Shields came in, she was very self-conscious and had low self-esteem. She was now a single mother and didn't know how she could work and pay for childcare. Ms. Shields stated that although she had transportation, she did not have money for gas. She related that she loved her previous job in the hotel industry and would like to get back into that line of work. Because of pregnancy complications she had gone on maternity leave. When she returned, the hotel had changed owners, and she no longer had a job.

The TANF Workforce Specialist explained the TEA program to Ms. Shields and that TANF could assist her with childcare and mileage reimbursement. After assessing her needs and goals, the TANF staff worked with Ms. Shields to create her Employment Plan.

She began a job skills program at Arkansas Northeastern College, which is called Teaching Ourselves Options for Living Successfully (TOOLS), where she completed the Career Readiness Certification and other training she would need for employment. After the first week she came to the TANF office and stated that this was exactly what she needed. She was regaining her self-confidence. When she completed the TOOLS program, her case manager discussed the WEX program and identified the available work sites. She chose Life House Ministries as a good place to work. She began WEX, and she continued to flourish. Life House Ministries quickly recognized her computer and office management skills. She started submitting her resumes and job applications and eventually obtained employment at Quality Inn Suites. She is elated that she is back in the hotel industry, and with her training in hotel management, she hopes to reach her goal of a management position. She said she feels at home with her job and enjoys going to work each day.

Christie commented, "The TEA Program has been a blessing to me!"