

# The Heart of Health Care Career Coaching

REAL STORIES OF HOW PEOPLE CHANGE THEIR LIVES



*Working to create an adequate pipeline  
of qualified, competent and  
compassionate health care workers to  
meet the needs of the  
West Central Region  
for the next 15 years.*

Lee Payne  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Executive Summary		2
1	Bouncing Back – Big Time	Marsha	5
2	Determination Pays	Jane	6
3	A Field Hand No More	Tony	7
4	A Flying Fit	Mikey	8
5	Setting a New Course	Betty	9
6	Upgrading to Health Care	Nicole	10
7	No Longer a Substitute	Leigh	11
8	Moving Industry to Industry	Alice	12
9	Arising From the Ashes	Chuck	13
10	Dynamic Duo	Joe and Judy	14
11	A Nursing Natural	Martha	15
12	An Organization Woman	Lillian	16
13	New Career in Mid – Life	Janice	17
14	Dream Comes True the Hard Way	Sally	18
15	A Cross-Industry Move	Cindy	19
16	Family Climbing From the Ashes	Danielle	20
17	With a Little Help From Home	Joe	21
18	Hitting the RN Fast Track	Liz	22
19	Finding Water in a Desert	Lucy	23
20	Finding a Better Fit	Michael	24
21	So You Think You Can Dance?	Paula	25
22	Stepping in to the Economy	Sonya	26
23	Gas Station to Billing Office	Suzanne	27
24	Clawing Back From Rock Bottom	Carolyn	28
25	Recovery From a Multi – Disaster	Julia	29
26	Breaking Through the Barriers	Karen	30
27	A Hard Road Home	Naomi	31
28	A Critical Personal Discovery	Sandy	32
29	Finding the Right Prescription	Dave	33

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Would you find a way to pay for and implement a program if you knew it could profoundly impact peoples' lives?

The Health Care Career Coaching (HCC) Project has demonstrated how four highly practical coaching sessions modeled around foundational and personal skills assessments has dramatic impacts. Dozens of people discovered within themselves the salvation of their economic future. The process ignited the excitement that enables people to find, customize and succeed in new career paths.

Our Health Care Career Coach relates an e-mail from a client, a middle-aged mother of six, displaced from a comfortable management position. She is starting over at \$8 per hour as a Certified Nurse Assistant, and writes:

“I am just so excited, I can't stand it! I have not had this kind of passion for something in a long time! I owe it all to you and this program! I will keep you posted as to my successes!”

In a follow-up e-mail, she added:

“Again, I just wanted to thank you . . . You have boosted my spirits and renewed my faith in myself! I now have a sense of direction, and you have helped me to envision my future as an RN. I now know what I have to do, and I promise you that I will not fail! You have given me the tools to make my dreams a reality!”

This project's venue was the health care industry. And initial results show that Health Care Career Coaching helps people find their own ways into satisfying and rewarding health industry careers. Conversely and just as important, it also finds that a health care career is not suited for them. This prevents the waste of costly training or the inherent risk of employee turnover. This client–centric approach offers equal success in any economic sector. It's about labor supply and demand: moving workers into areas of their own interest where employment opportunities exist and then developing that talent based on those needs.

Unfortunately, people make uninformed decisions about what career to pursue, what classes to take, and ultimately end up in the wrong place in either post-secondary education or in their career of choice. Why? Because they haven't had the opportunity to discuss their dreams and career interests based on clear knowledge of their abilities and interests.

This practice provides an essential change in the process. It looks at Foundational Skills (Reading for Information, Applied Math and Locating Information) and Soft Skills (Performance, Talent and Fit). It then employs a Career Coach to guide a person through informed decision

making in a highly structured process. The idea is to place a clients in to the right track, either educational or job search, with the ultimate goal of skilled job placement. The magic, according to our Career Coach, is showing people how to interpret their assessment results, almost always resulting in excitement and hope. Discovering or rediscovering talents and interests that they never knew existed boosts most clients' self-confidence. So does flexing the research and decision-making muscle they build while customizing their own career exploration and plan.

The results are amazing...

1. One young participant who dropped out of school found renewed interest in Nursing after completing her GED and going through the program. She didn't realize how valuable being bilingual would be to the health care industry. She has an overwhelming willingness to study day and night and attend classes year round to achieve her goal. Her Career Coach says the client sustained a tremendous boost in confidence – confidence in a future health care career she never considered until this point.
2. Another client was employed with a bank where his job was eliminated. He struggled for months to find similar work and when he scored high on his WorkKeys assessments and understood the meaning behind his scores he immediately called his wife to let her know everything would be ok. He had discovered he possessed skills transferable to health care. He is an eager first time college student.
3. For the first time in years, a 50-year-old sees hope and a future, and is happy to pursue her Nurse Assistant Certification. Coaching helped her rediscover a sense of purpose along with great enthusiasm. She had been at a very low point in life when Career Coaching plucked her out of depression. She had no idea that her long experience as a housekeeper was a substantial health care asset.

This systemic approach to self-discovery has profound regional implications.

Overall, new careers for displaced workers mean improved Michigan State government revenue and a lower net social cost to its taxpayers.

The closer the fit between the Michigan Works' agency's twin sets of customers – unemployed people seeking work and employers seeking qualified workers – the greater the productivity Michigan Works! can demonstrate to its budget authority. And likewise the greater those employees' rate of retention with new employers, the less likely those workers will further burden the budget.

Post secondary schools potentially can increase placement and completion rates. This is also opportunity to replace some of the functionality of their current counselors while providing better candidates for local employers.

Coaching provides employers with assurance of high quality referrals leading to: increased retention, improved succession planning, and reduced training costs for new employees. One of the heaviest human resource burdens is sorting hoards of applicants for low and mid-level skill jobs. Health Care Career Coaching, however, enables clients to pin-point their job of fit and interest and employers to reap that benefit of knowing that someone is 'pre-qualified'.

Health care employers that have been introduced to this program have expressed interest in being introduced to these 'pre-qualified' candidates as a means to supplement their normal recruiting channels. Employers are able to reduce recruiting costs and redeploy staff to recruitment of upper level candidates. Some employers feel strongly enough about the program that they are using the same tools to assist incumbent workers in developing career plans. They will not give out additional training dollars until they go through the process.

One example is a current hospital employee who hoped to become a nurse. Assessment and coaching, however, helped him discover that his skills and interests were better attuned for the Accounting career he is now pursuing. This kind of discovery may result in employment with the same employer or it creates a transition plan option. Either way the employer doesn't harbor an unhappy employee and doesn't pay for education dollars that may have gone to waste.

In more human terms, the happier each employer and employee is with each other, the less likely the employer is forced to bear the considerable expense of terminating and replacing that worker. The better the fit too, the greater the likelihood the employer will invest in added training for the employee and the more productive, and valuable that employee will become.

Ultimately the largest benefit is to the individual. Show a worker what is in their heart, match that to their skills, and unearth the 'fire in their belly' to set goals and undertake actions to achieve them. Ultimately the better the match of person's interests with an appropriate occupation will lead to a more rewarding work experience and career.

We can build upon this foundation of great stories in our region or we can do nothing and continue to watch the gap grow between qualified workers and job needs.

Career Coaching is a neutral, collaborative model in cooperation with the workforce, employers, and schools focused on systemic change for the future.

Much like the process of Career Coaching renews the heart of a person, these stories will tug at the heart strings – and you'll know this is the right thing to do. You'll be asking, "How do I implement a program like this?"

## BOUNCING BACK – BIG TIME

Marsha – June 2008

*She was interviewed and tested, a process eliciting information about talents and personal strengths Marsha never realized she possessed.*

It's a shock when a family's income instantly drops by a third.

And in March 2008, that's exactly what happened to Marsha and her family when she lost her eight-year logistics support job.

She and her husband and 14-year-old daughter didn't panic. They sturdily absorbed the impact. They took a deep collective breath, tightened spending and thanked their lucky stars they weren't financially over-extended.

Marsha immediately updated her resume and got busy looking for work. The Holland family, however, soon learned in a painfully personal way what they had read

for months in the news: competition for jobs in Michigan's dragging economy is intense.

Marsha's resumes and letters seemed to vanish into a black hole. Her job applications produced no responses. Her calls elicited polite negatives. She began to become discouraged, her imagination picturing 10-foot stacks of yellowing job applications in the back of every personnel office.

After three months of fruitless job-seeking, Marsha learned Michigan Works! had launched a program to find health care industry jobs for displaced workers. She asked to be included.

She was interviewed and tested, a process eliciting information about talents and personal strengths Marsha never realized she possessed. Discouragement gave way to hope and excitement when she learned that her skills and training were needed in health care.

Boosted with coaching that dealt with resumes and job interviews, Marsha launched herself back at the job market and with renewed enthusiasm.

As it turned out, though Marsha was well qualified for several health care industry positions, her new career-building skills helped the logistics industry rediscover that it *needed* her back . . . and in a position with better pay, greater responsibility and a future.

By late July, Marsha had restored her family's full income and then some. The process at Michigan Works! showed Marsha how to successfully utilize the system in Michigan.

## DETERMINATION PAYS

Jane – June 2008

*She eagerly responded earlier this year when Michigan Works! launched its Health Care Career Coaching program for displaced workers.*

Jane hasn't resumed her health care career yet.

But her Health Care Career Coach believes that if any client is a contender as the most likely to succeed in the industry, Jane is the one.

When a 24-hour medical clinic closed three years ago, this 35-year-old Holland area mother of three lost a job she loved. Among other things, her work entailed follow-up calls to check on patients' progress and to ensure they were following doctors' directions.

She not only enjoyed helping patients deal with health questions they sometimes didn't grasp, but she also

became increasingly fascinated with health care itself. So when the clinic closed, she immediately began a highly energetic job hunting program for a similar job.

Nothing turned up . . . except that she learned she was suffering a medical problem of her own: cancer. But that didn't slow her job search. In fact, Jane has the key strength any job-seeker needs: she doesn't let rejection bother her.

Says her coach: "It just seems to roll off her." And despite having a personal health issue that would depress many people, Jane just works through the chemo therapy and just keeps soldiering on.

She eagerly responded earlier this year when Michigan Works! launched its Health Care Career Coaching program for displaced workers. Testing revealed that she had the disposition and ability to become a Registered Nurse and she set that occupation as her long-term goal.

In mounting the first step on the ladder to that goal, she enrolled in September 2008 in the Thompson Medical Technology Center course to train as a Medical Secretary. Her intermediate goal is to complete that training, then to go to work as a Medical Secretary, and to enroll part-time in studies for her bachelor's degree in Nursing.

In stepping up to that rung on her ladder, she hit another obstacle: her family had too much income for the State of Michigan to help with tuition. So she just got busy and in a few weeks found private financing.

The only question now is whether Jane can handle a husband, three sub-teen sons, cancer therapy, her studies *and* job hunting?

The Michigan Works! coach who tested her and helped her tweaked her resume and job interview skills says yes — that it's going to be a slam-dunk and home run rolled into one.

## A FIELD HAND NO MORE

Tony – July 2008

*As a result of three intense career assessments and exploration sessions, Tim was astonished to learn he scored consistently high for training as a Surgical Technician — a high-demand hospital job.*

In late spring this year, the world lurched for Tony, a 29-year-old Holland man.

Tony was employed at a local bank's call center when his supervisor pulled him aside to reluctantly advise that his job had just blinked out of existence.

Such things never come at a good time, but they hit Tony and his wife at a particularly bad time. The couple not only had to cover their routine housing and grocery expenses, as everybody must, but they also had some substantial immediate bills.

Tony began sending out resumes right and left, but needing money right now; he went to work in Ottawa

County's blueberry harvest. It was a form of labor which helped him rediscover not only how much heat, humidity and insect life he could tolerate, but also how much his back, arm and hand muscles could ache.

It certainly was nothing like working with his wits on the phone.

Prospects were bleak, too, because the resumes were producing no results and with each berry picked, the end of the harvest grew nearer and nearer. It was with a growing sense of urgency, then, that Tony applied for inclusion in the No Worker Left Behind incentive. This, in turn, led him to complete the Health Care Career Questionnaire and WorkKeys assessments at his local Michigan Works! office.

His WorkKeys scores — which measures his mastery of reading, mathematics and locating information — was high enough to qualify him for the Health Care Coaching Program and obtain a Gold National Career Readiness Certificate.

As a result of three intense career assessments and exploration sessions, Tony was astonished to learn he scored consistently high for training as a Surgical Technician — a high-demand hospital job. Upon completion of funding eligibility requirements and other follow-up meetings, Tony qualified for and was accepted in the Surgical Tech program at Baker College in Muskegon

Now — with the memory of blueberry-picking as incentive — Tony is eagerly engaged as a first-time college student working for his associate's degree in science in the Surgical Tech program at Baker College. The future looks much better from a classroom lab than stooping beside a blueberry bush.

## A FLYING FIT

Mikey – September 2008

*But while he learned through his interviews and coaching that he probably could make a go of it in the health care industry, he also found that he had the right stuff for a career in aviation.*

A 24-year-old Holland area man found himself on the street late this summer. He had been an assembler with a recreational boat manufacturer in the tulip city, but the economic downturn sank his job.

Mikey and his young wife immediately felt the financial pinch — and it was pinching painfully.

Job hunting with only a high school diploma was turning up nothing for this young immigrant and the only work his wife could find was part-time babysitting.

But it turned out that Mikey possessed more qualifications and personal resources he realized. It just took some testing and guidance to reveal them.

The battery of assessments in the Health Career Coaching program showed that he had satisfactory aptitudes for a career in the health care industry. In fact, his WorkKeys levels — the measure of his ability at practical mathematics, reading for information and applied research — turned out to be exceptional.

But while he learned through his interviews and coaching that he probably could make a go of it in the health care industry, he also found that he had the right stuff for a career in aviation.

And — for a very special personal reason — that just happened to be a perfect fit for Mikey.

To most people of oriental heritage, it's imperative to live near and give strong support to their parents. But Mikey's surviving parent, his mom, happens to be terrified of flying. So she had remained behind in Texas -- a permanent, aching situation -- when Mikey and his wife flew to Michigan for his boat assembly job.

It turned out, however, that the flight attendant school for which Mikey qualified is near his mother's home. Accordingly, after two months without work, Mikey has begun studies in an American Airlines school, with good prospects of employment ahead.

## SETTING A NEW COURSE

Betty – March 2008

*The test results astonished her. Out of the blue she learned that in terms of aptitude, personal values and skills she is an excellent candidate to become a Surgical Technician.*

Like so many people in West Michigan, Betty — a 30's-something Grand Rapids resident — was earning a decent living as an industrial assembler when the manufacturer ceased operations.

Life changed abruptly. The plant closure left this divorced mother of a teenage daughter with no support and no immediate prospects. Like most people in her position, Betty started seeking work without delay.

Depressingly, the only work she found over the following year was grooming pets — and to add insult to injury, the job was in Holland, to which she had to commute.

Thanks to steadily rising gasoline prices, it seemed at

times as if she were losing money just by going to work.

She then learned of the Michigan Works! Health Career Coaching Program — established by the Health Care Regional Skills Alliance. Betty took the project's battery of assessments — the first such tests she'd ever taken — and then participated in three coaching sessions.

The results astonished her. Out of the blue she learned that in terms of aptitude, personal values and skills she is an excellent candidate to become a Surgical Technician.

So this autumn, she's still commuting . . . but in an entirely new direction and frame of mind.

She's driving I-96 to Baker College in Muskegon where she's excitedly pursuing the 2-year associate in science degree required of a Surgical Technician: currently one of the most in-demand hospital jobs.

A Surgical Tech is a little-known but highly skilled worker who ensures that all surgical instruments and implements — from scalpels and sponges to hemostats and needles — are germ-free. Without an up-to-the-mark Surgical Tech, a team of surgeons and nurses is practicing risky medicine — third-world medicine.

Betty isn't crazy about the commute, of course. It's a long haul to Muskegon, especially keeping alert for deer and looking out for the snow squalls right about Nunica.

But she's got a favorite buddy with whom to share her ride: her 18-year-old daughter who also is a freshman this year at Baker.

## UPGRADING TO HEALTH CARE

Nicole – July 2008

*The tests revealed that her experience and skills — especially her eye for fine details — indicated that she would be ideally suited to work in complex niche of the health industry: medical billing and coding.*

Nicole this autumn is able to take a breath of relief now that she has a goal — plus some funding towards it — that never before entered her mind.

With the help of her mother, this 26-year-old Holland mom was attempting to raise four children with her pay as a bi-lingual receptionist at a tractor supply firm. But then came the lay-off and she began job-searching.

She had no experience in how to conduct herself in a job interview, or how to make a resume exciting and no knowledge of how to research the job market.

Happily, for Nicole, she happened to qualify through Michigan Works! for the Health Career Coaching Project's

battery of tests and it opened a new world to her.

The tests revealed that her experience and skills — especially her eye for fine details — indicated that she would be ideally suited to work in complex niche of the health industry: medical billing and coding.

Without going into extensive detail, two things happen to the clinic, hospital or doctor's office that fails to use the correct 5-digit codes when it sends claims to public and private health insurance entities.

First, those insurance industry carriers deny erroneous claims outright.

Second, the clinic, hospital or doctor's office in question must then waste ruinous amounts of time and money researching the errors and then re-billing those claims correctly.

Meanwhile, long delays in receiving insurance payment can poison relations with patients, consulting physicians and health institutions.

Right now Nicole is learning exactly how expensive such miss-steps can be to potential employers . . . and that she must be alert to the distinctions between procedure codes, injection codes, diagnostic codes, durable medical goods codes and the modifiers for those codes.

That's just some of the information she has begun to assimilate in training at the Thompson M-TEC Center in Ottawa County. And as she tools up for a job in an industry new to her, she's being coached in interview techniques, resumes and in interrogating this new job market.

## NO LONGER A SUBSTITUTE

Leigh – April 2008

*The resume received a real-world A-plus, because that hospital's nuclear medicine unit contacted Leigh with a job offer. They wanted her to come on board as a Unit Technician.*

Working through the Health Career Coaching program, a Holland woman achieved a short-term confidence-building success.

Leigh, wife and mother of two teen-agers, had been working part-time as a home health care substitute. This meant that for an unscheduled six to 12 hours a week she would replace regular workers in the homes of the very aged or disabled.

Her duties were to feed and bath clients, sometimes to care for their toilet needs while maintaining charts about their medications and daily food intake and physical activity. The work can be unrewarding because such

patients sometimes can act as unpleasantly as teen-agers . . . particularly if they suffer chronic pain or are upset that a stranger doesn't know their ritualistic routines.

Seeking a change and more stable employment through the No Worker Left Behind program, Leigh qualified for and underwent Health Care Career Coaching.

The battery of tests showed that her aptitudes and attitudes suited her for a possible Medical Technology career: that is, as one who "reads" blood samples and other diagnostic tests in clinics, hospitals or physicians' offices.

With her coach's help, she developed an education program plan that would take her to Grand Rapids Community College. She also was bringing together a financial plan for that training, meanwhile receiving coaching in writing resumes.

Resume training, meanwhile, is not just an academic exercise. It also involves critiques by real-world health care employers. One of Leigh's sample resumes was sent for a critique to the personnel office of a West Michigan Hospital.

The resume received a real-world A-plus, because that hospital's nuclear medicine unit contacted Leigh with a job offer. They wanted her to come on board as a Unit Technician.

It's an understatement to say that Leigh was thrilled at the opportunity of full-time work with a regular schedule in pleasant surroundings.

Her new job is an entry-level detail-intensive administrative position at the intersecting paper trails — referrals, diagnoses, therapy, billing, insurance — connecting the hospital, labs, patients, insurers and specialists.

Her coach says the swirl of activity very quickly will teach Leigh a great deal about the health care industry. Meanwhile, if she chooses, the new job offers Leigh the flexibility to pursue her Medical Technology training plan on a part-time basis.

## MOVING INDUSTRY TO INDUSTRY

Alice – July 2008

*The program in turn boosted her confidence by indicating that her skills and interests are suited for work in a medical office setting.*

With the aid of funding from the State of Michigan, an unemployed South Haven single mom with three youngsters enrolled this September at Lakeshore Michigan College.

Alice, who's in her 30s, had eight years of seniority as a factory production worker. But the seniority meant little in summer 2008 when the faltering economy forced her employer to cease operations.

It's the kind of event that causes people's confidence to falter, especially when they have dependents whom they hardly can support.

Alice began seeking jobs while also seeking help through Michigan Works!

She found the help plus a goal that eventually could lead to a stable position in one of West Michigan's chief growth industries — health care.

Initial assessments guided Alice into the Health Care Career Coaching program and its more extensive battery of evaluations.

The program in turn boosted her confidence by indicating that her skills and interests are suited for work in a medical office setting.

And that's the training in which is now enrolled — with financial aid from the State of Michigan — at Lakeshore college.

She also is receiving coaching in resume writing and job interview skills so that, upon graduation, she'll know how to express the value she'll bring to a new employer.

## ARISING FROM THE ASHES

Chuck – August 2008

*“This man has been through the mill,” the coach said, “and he has come out of it the most consistently patient and kind person I’ve ever met.”  
...“His disposition aligns perfectly with the results of his testing.”*

There were times that Chuck must have felt as if a train had hit him . . . a very, very long train.

In the early years of this new century, Chuck — a 40-year-old college graduate — was doing well in his career as a mortgage broker.

But in 2006 the faltering West Michigan economy and the slowly spiraling decline in the housing industry put him out of work.

The loss of income also meant the immediate loss of his home. The pain of that event, however, was quickly drowned in a welter of emotion when — a month after Chuck’s lay-off — Chuck’s father died.

If that weren’t enough, Chuck immediately had to begin caring for his mother.

She has a long, lingering ailment and for years had been utterly dependent upon Chuck’s late father; dependent upon her husband not only for in-home care, but also for company and even the mere process of making simple decisions.

With the continuing decline of the housing market, it became obvious to Chuck he needed to change careers. Accordingly, he sought help through the No Worker Left Behind program.

To many people, this perfect storm of misfortune would be too much.

But his mentor with the Health Career Coaching Program— for which he qualified easily — says she believes his searing experience has made him uniquely suited to be the very thing he now desires to become: a Registered Nurse.

“This man has been through the mill,” the coach said, “and he has come out of it the most consistently patient and kind person I’ve ever met. He simply radiates trustworthiness. And he always, always smiles.”

She said his disposition aligns perfectly with the results of his Health Care Career testing.

She believes that when he completes his Certified Nurse Assistant training at Walker Medical this autumn he will have no difficulty at all in finding work and, with that income, starting his academic work for his bachelor’s degree in nursing.

## DYNAMIC DUO

### Joe & Judy – September 2008

*With the results of those tests and the career paths each has carved out, they're excited about the future for the first time in years.*

Joe and Judy are unusual in that they have entered Michigan Works! Health Career Coaching program as a married couple.

And, too, the education plans which they developed separately have qualified for state funding. At the first of the year they will enter separate health training programs at Ferris State University.

Judy's course of study at Ferris's Grand Rapids campus will be Respiratory Therapy and Joe will begin training for his new career in Radiation Technology.

The couple's career-changing story starts in 2004 in suburban Grand Rapids when Joe decided he couldn't

take it any longer. After nine years, teaching high school physics just wasn't working out.

"I think part of the problem," says his Health Care Career Coach, "is that he's too quiet and gentle. I think those kids went over him like a steam-roller. It was turning out to be an ordeal, not a labor of love".

Leaving a tenured position in public education with no other source of income was a gutsy move — especially considering that they have four children.

But Joe did it and Judy, a homemaker, stood by her man in the move.

Joe spent four years trying to find a new career. He worked in a number of jobs ranging from truck driving to part-time work as a church secretary.

Then, knowing they needed to build up a fund for the children's college education, they decided together to approach the office at Michigan Works! and enter the No Worker Left Behind program.

Both took the program's initial WorkKeys assessments and with their same soaring scores of 5-5-7, displayed high abilities to apply mathematics, to use reading and to locate information. These scores also landed them both a Gold National Career Readiness Certificate.

Those results, in turn, opened the door to the Health Care Career Coaching battery of tests in which their outcomes indicated their new career paths.

With the results of those tests and the career paths each has carved out, they're excited about the future for the first time in years.

## A NURSING NATURAL

Martha – August 2008

*... she finally thought she'd pay a visit to see if Michigan Works! could help. It did, and then some.*

Martha's story is like that of many young people nowadays: school bored her and she wanted to be out on her own. So this Zeeland girl quit high school and found production work in a factory. Oh, the job was dullsville, but the supervisors were decent. And it was neat because with a regular paycheck she could rent an apartment and come and go as she pleased.

Granted, no money remained by the next payday. In fact, Martha slowly sensed that while her earnings were decent — it sure beat hamburger-flipping — she seemed to be in a bit of a rut: same plant every day; same work every day; same expenses, no hope of a major pay hike or advancement. Having quit school, she just didn't

qualify.

Meanwhile, unsettling rumors were circulating among her co-workers; rumors about things called lay-offs. Then — boom — Martha's job was gone. Life no longer was neat. The next cold slap of reality was realizing that having no diploma barred most employers' doors to her. Fortunately, her parents' door still was open. Her folks took her back in and Martha applied herself like grim death to the public schools' Adult High School Completion program.

By 2004, armed with her GED, she at least was able to at least find part-time jobs. During that period, she also went to Grand Valley State Colleges to enroll in training for a secret dream of hers. She'd always wanted to be a Registered Nurse.

It came as a cold shock to learn that GVSU's nursing program had a 4-year waiting list. Nonetheless, she put her name on the list, grimly determined to start trying to save a least a little tuition money. But because decent jobs became ever more difficult to find, savings proved impossible so she finally thought she'd pay a visit to see if Michigan Works! could help. It did, and then some.

Because Martha worked so earnestly in pursuing her GED, she scored high on the WorkKeys test, the doorway to the Health Care Career Coaching program. The testing surprised Martha by revealing she is incredibly well-suited to nursing. "For one thing," her coach said, "she's bilingual, which is very valuable. And her personality type is perfect for nursing: she's a good listener, she has a beautiful smile, she's very positive, she has all the social graces and she is kind."

Because of her scores, Martha is receiving State of Michigan funding and acceptance in the two-year Registered Nursing program at Muskegon Community College. According to her coach, she intends to study day and night and attend classes year-round. "The other thing that has happened," the coach said, "is that the HCC program has given her a tremendous boost in

confidence . . . and a future in health care.”

## AN ORGANIZATION WOMAN

Lillian – August 2008

*Based on her skills, it steered her into the program and from there she wound up in the hands of a Health Care Career Coach and combined with testing pointed her toward training in Medical Billing and Coding.*

Thanks to her personal determination — and to the self-discovery that came from her Health Care Career coaching and testing — Lillian is on the road to becoming a Medical Billing and Coding Specialist.

It’s the kind of career that will demand hyper-precise focus on details.

Meanwhile, the 36-year-old Holland native also will be engaged in drawn-out telephone and e-mail negotiations which arise at her desk: the intersection of numerous medical issues involving health insurance companies, federal Medicare staffers, state Medicaid workers and often-confused and frequently irate patients

It looks like a good fit, because Lillian for several years was a private sector numbers-cruncher: a corporate payroll specialist who had to deal with complex state and federal tax withholding mandates, Section 125 programs, insurance and retirement withholdings and — now and then — angry employees who felt they weren’t getting a fair shake.

Then, as the newspapers say, Lillian was “idled” by a lay-off. But she never was what you’d call idle. She didn’t have the time. She was caring for her desperately ill father while also helping her husband nurse his construction business through Michigan’s current economic downturn.

Meanwhile, she spent six solid months sending out resumes and seeking a new job. No luck. Like so many determined people, she went as a last resort to see what Michigan Works! could do for her. Based on her skills, it steered her into the No Worker Left Behind program and from there she wound up in the hands of a Health Care Career Coach and combined with testing pointed her toward training in Medical Billing and Coding.

It’s a critical post demanding sharp people at every hospital, clinic and medical office in West Michigan.

And it didn’t take her long to focus on that career. The program, among other things, mandates that each participant research three potential careers then develop a training plan and a plan about how to finance it.

According to the coach who helps steer participants, Lillian was a driver. “She is highly organized and resilient,” the coach said, “and she has great follow-up with any suggestion or in any direction you point her.”

Because of her family’s finances and the likelihood of her success, Lillian qualified for financing to help her attend the one-year billing and coding program at the Ross Medical Campus.

## NEW CAREER IN MID – LIFE

### Janice – September 2008

*The key thing, the coach said, is that Janice had the tools all along, but didn't know it; that the Health Care Coaching program simply showed her what she could do.*

Because her husband has been out of work, Janice was the sole provider for her Holland family of eight — six of whom are teenagers under age 19. Fortunately she had a good job for 15 years serving as an IT Manager for a substantial corporation. But a sudden economic stroke last February sent the family into deep financial crisis. The shock came in the form Janice's lay-off. Both pay and benefits came to a halt. No more fad clothes for the kids; meals no longer could be taken for granted.

Like many strong and determined people, this 44-year-old mom elected to seek work on her own. She began sending out letters and resumes. Though she had ample

skills and experience to offer the market, eight months of fruitless searching made Janice feel like a minnow trying to swim against white-water current.

In September, she paid a visit to Michigan Works! where she scored high on the WorkKeys tests and the talent, fit, skills and interests assessments showed that Janice would do well as a Registered Nurse, a job in high demand.

Unfortunately, Michigan Works! cannot help people finance nursing school for which there's a current 2-year waiting list. But the agency did provide her financial assistance to enroll at the Thompson M-TEC Center for training as a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA).

The course is a short one during part of which Janice will be engaged in on-the-job training. Given success in that training, chances are excellent that she will find employment as a CNA and begin earning again, while pursuing part-time studies for her bachelor of science degree in nursing. According to her coach, the road Janice must travel probably would look very rocky, indeed, to most people. But not Janice.

In an e-mail to her coach, she wrote: "I am just so excited, I can't stand it! I have not had this kind of passion for something in a long time! I owe it all to you and this program! I will keep you posted as to my successes! I wish you the best, and hope that you are able to continue to touch lives as you have mine!"

The coach finds Janice's attitude a blessing. "Work as a CNA pays only \$8 an hour," the coach said, "but Janice is remarkable: she's very courageous and determined. And instead of complaining about having to make such a new start right at the bottom, she is extremely appreciative of this opportunity. I think she's going to do very well."

The key thing, the coach said, is that Janice had the tools all along, but didn't know it; that the Health Care Coaching program simply showed her what she could do.

## DREAM COMES TRUE THE HARD WAY

Sally – September 2008

*... when they asked who might be interested in a Health Care Career, she thought “What the heck?” and raised her hand.*

Since childhood, Sally secretly had nursed a dream: namely, to become a nurse.

But because the 40-year-old Hudsonville bank teller grew up with a learning disability — she was moderately dyslexic — her family always held her potential in low esteem, and so did she.

In fact, based on low grades and her own low expectations, she quit school before graduation and spent some time as a production worker.

Her dislike of the work became so intense, however, that she was motivated to earn her high school diploma. And as part of that success, she discovered she could work

quite handily with numbers. This talent enabled her to work as a teller where her naturally friendly personality also helped Sally discover that she enjoyed working with people.

The idea of a health care career still lay in the back of her mind, but she didn't pursue the idea because she had no confidence in her ability to master the difficult reading about physiology and microbiology.

But as the weight of the economic downturn began leaning on banks, Sally found herself laid off in February. Her husband still had work, but she wanted to resume earning so that the couple eventually could finance college for their child.

She spent much of 2008 trying unsuccessfully to find work. In September she walked into Michigan Works! and surprised herself by doing very well on the WorkKeys assessments.

Then when they asked who might be interested in a Health Care Career, she thought, “What the heck?” and raised her hand.

The subsequent battery of Health Care Career coaching tests showed that as a highly conscientious, detail-oriented person and a natural numbers-cruncher, Sally could be a great fit as a Surgical Technician.

“It was a tremendous boost to her confidence,” says her Health Care Career coach. “She already had shown herself that she could deal with dyslexia, so she decided to go for it.”

She qualified for funding for the one-year training program and, come January, she will start working toward her Associate's in Science Degree at Baker College in Muskegon.

## A CROSS INDUSTRY MOVE

Cindy – September 2008

*... then she heard about the federal No Worker Left Behind program and inquired about it at Michigan Works!*

A loss to West Michigan's recreational boating industry apparently is going to turn out to be a big gain for its health care industry.

Thanks to economic downturns, the salaried staffers working for a manufacturer of recreational boats in Holland were putting in extra time. In fact, 32-year-old Cindy — a production manager — was working a horrendous schedule, sometimes as many as 70 hours in a week.

She was a 9-year employee doing her utmost to help keep the firm going — and, with it, her job. But finally, in August, the company had no choice but to lay off her and

some of her co-workers.

Cindy immediately began looking for production work, but it seemed like a forlorn hope. Meanwhile, she also contacted Grand Valley State University to ask about enrolling in its 4-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program.

The notion of becoming a Nurse had been in her mind for some years. After she and her husband conceived a child, she had complications with her pregnancy and had to spend many pre-natal days at the hospital.

But aside from her anxiety about her little boy (who now is a healthy young lad), she found the institution and its processes so deeply interesting that they fascinated her. She began toying with the idea of a health care career and the lay-off occasioned her contact with GVSU.

But when she found that GVSU's 4-year nursing program was booked solid through 2010 — meaning she couldn't possibly become a nurse before 2014 — it came as kind of a squelch. Likewise, it was daunting to be unable to find any other meaningful work.

But then she heard about the federal No Worker Left Behind program and inquired about it at Michigan Works!

To make a long story short, she placed well — she achieved a Silver Certificate, in fact — in her Health Care Career (HCC) coaching test battery. The evaluation indicated she would be an excellent nurse.

At the same time, she learned through her own mandatory HCC research projects that Baker College in Muskegon had a two-year Registered Nurse program for which there was no waiting list at all.

Accordingly, she took the school's entrance examination. "Her entrance exam results were very high," her Coach reported. "She's a hard worker and she should do very well."

## FAMILY CLIMBING FROM THE ASHES

Danielle – November 2008

*According to her coach, Danielle has begun her training with a renewed sense of hope and is looking forward to a new career and a restoration of her family's finances.*

For Danielle, a 46-year-old wife and mother of three, 2007 will go down in the books as a very rough year.

In 2008, however, she and her Holland family started making a comeback.

With the start of 2007, Danielle held what appeared to be a stable, high-paying position as a Technical Trainer for a major cell phone firm. Her husband also had a solid job. And with those two incomes they were buying a larger home, supporting two teens at home and sending a third youngster to college.

Then, in September, everything nosedived. Danielle's husband lost his job and hers disappeared, too.

She quickly found an equally good position with a second cell phone company, but almost as quickly that firm undertook its own major contraction. Danielle was among the unemployed again.

Worse than that, the family couldn't keep up their mortgage payments. They lost their home and had to go into bankruptcy, with all the wracking internal stresses and strains such misfortunes entail.

But the family held together and then in late 2008, Danielle saw a newspaper article about the No Worker Left Behind program at Michigan Works! She visited the agency's Holland office and was given the WorkKeys assessments in which she achieved high scores.

Further assessments revealed that her interests, aptitudes and personal values probably would make her a highly qualified candidate for employment as an Occupational Therapist. Moreover, she also qualified for Michigan Works! tuition assistance to begin attending the 2-year Occupational Therapy program at Grand Rapids Community College.

According to her coach, Danielle has begun her training with a renewed sense of hope and is looking forward to a new career and a restoration of her family's finances.

## WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HOME

Joe – November 2008

*“He has moved ahead with a committed attitude to return to college, a dream that he thought he never would fulfill,” says his mentor in the Health Care Career Coaching program.*

Nothing at all is unusual in seeing a dad and his teenagers spreading out homework on the dining room table in the evening.

In fact, Joe always did help his two sons and daughter with homework. He also coached the soccer teams on which they and their classmates played.

But now the kids are helping him hit the books at night while coaching him in Windows and other computer keyboard complexities.

This story starts in Joe’s very tough decision early this year to leave what appeared to be a dead-end career. He had been with a local furniture manufacturer a quarter

century and worried that further economic downturns might strand him in permanent unemployment. Accordingly, he decided to reinvent himself in a Health Care Career.

Part of this Holland resident’s difficulty in the transition was fearing that at age 47 he was too old to master something new — let alone return to college.

But testing through the federal No Worker Left Behind program at Michigan Works! indicated that he had the aptitude and attitude for such a career. He began his 2-year Radiation Technologist course of study through Grand Rapids Community College this autumn.

“He has moved ahead with a committed attitude to return to college, a dream that he thought he never would fulfill,” says his mentor in the Health Care Career Coaching program.

Too, he tells the coach that his program has an added triple benefit: it brings him and his teenage tutors closer together; it stretches their high school brains with his college-level work; and it has done a great deal to restore his self-confidence.

## HITTING THE RN FAST TRACK

Liz – November 2008

*Because of her subsequent assessment results, the intensity with which she researched her potential career and because of a very high grade average in high school, she was able to jump the waiting lists...*

A lot of people would have been emotionally shattered to learn they were losing a supervisory position with local boat manufacturer.

Not Liz, a 35-year-old Holland woman.

In fact, that loss was the impetus she needed to start a wildfire pursuit for a career in the Health Care.

Her fascination with the industry started in 2004 when Liz's son was born prematurely. The infant was so frail that he needed eight solid months of intensive post natal care. Liz took leave from her job to spend as much time as she could with the little guy until he was ready to come home.

He's healthy lad and progressing well. And now — post lay-off — so is Liz.

When her job at Tiara disappeared during operations downsizing, she reported to Michigan Works! to begin seeking a new career in Nursing. Her eight months' exposure to medicine and hospital operations had led her to flirt with the idea of becoming a Registered Nurse.

Moreover, in the four years since she brought her son home, she had become disenchanted with her work as a Supervisor. Some of her subordinates had been quarrelsome and, she felt, unappreciative of the opportunities their jobs created. Too, having spent so much time seeing the life-giving nature of Nursing and Health Care, any other career seemed dull to her.

At Michigan Works! Liz scored very well in the WorkKeys assessments gaining entrance to the Health Care Career Coaching program.

Because of her subsequent assessment results, the intensity with which she researched her potential career and because of a very high grade average in high school, she was able to jump the waiting lists and win immediate acceptance to the 2-year Registered Nurse Program at Baker College where she now has begun her training.

## FINDING WATER IN A DESERT

Lucy – November 2008

*But she did drop in at Michigan Works! after a friend told her of a news article describing the No Worker Left Behind program.*

Young people learn a great deal through mistakes, and Lucy, 23, is no exception.

Lucy is a native of Pennsylvania who — like most people her age — just wanted to get away from home and be out on her own. So, she left her home state . . . and migrated to Michigan to find a career for herself.

She arrived in Holland in 2007 just as the economic downturn was getting underway and she just couldn't find a good full-time job. Being a determined kid, she didn't sit around and mope. She sought temporary work, earning at least some income through a series of three temp jobs.

But those earnings weren't large enough or consistent enough to keep food on the table and pay the rent, too. As 2007 slipped into 2008, she found herself slipping further and further into debt. Because she was a newcomer who had never worked steadily, she didn't qualify for employment compensation.

But she did drop in at Michigan Works! after a friend told her of a news article describing the No Worker Left Behind program. She scored very strongly in the WorkKeys assessments which, in turn, lead her to the Health Care Career Coaching program.

That program's battery of assessments and discovery showed that working as a Medical Transcriptionist is, in fact, ideal for Lucy. Further, thanks to her circumstances, she qualified for Michigan Works! funding to pay for training in the medical component of such work.

As she pursues her studies, she also is undergoing coaching in resume writing. In fact, she is making contacts all over the West Side of the state in hopes of finding a steady job in what now is one of the area's few growth sectors: the Health Care Industry.

## FINDING A BETTER FIT

Michael – November 2008

*...and wishes that a program like this would have been available to him earlier in his career decision process.*

Michael, age 29, for some years has worked at St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Rapids as a phlebotomist.

His is an occupation which requires sensitivity and a delicate touch — sensitivity, because one often must draw blood from children or adults afflicted by a pathological fear of needles, or the sight of blood, or both. The fine touch comes in because one is pushing, say, a 12-gauge needle through tough skin, but yet with enough restraint so that the needle doesn't penetrate side-to-side through the slender target vein beneath.

Michael has been good at his job, but it's not an occupation that he has found rewarding.

Rather than wielding fine-gauge needles, he had a vague longing: a feeling that he might find more satisfaction in work that would entail physically larger things — and outdoors at that — that also would demand something more of brawn and less of delicacy.

Accordingly, he turned to the Health Care Career Coaching program to see whether some other career might be more suitable. This led him to undergo a battery of assessments which revealed that his aptitude and interest set would be far better attuned to the construction industry.

Michael still is a full-time phlebotomist.

But his occupation now is merely a job, a means to finance his training for a new career; and wishes that a program like this would have been available to him earlier in his career decision process. Nonetheless, Michael now is a part-time student at Grand Rapids Community College where he is pursuing a course of study in construction and design engineering.

## SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE?

Paula – November 2008

*Further assessment opened her eyes to interests she never realized she possessed; Then came some personal career exploration with a little help from her Health Care Career coach and a lot of encouragement from her husband.*

One common component in dealing with displaced workers is their need to re-establish confidence in themselves. This tends to be particularly true among people who have reached middle age.

Often they have the feeling — and it's often baseless — that they're too old to compete in the jitterbug job market of the 21st century.

Yet older people frequently wind up surprising themselves and others at how well they do the New Age economic dance. They often have unrealized built-in advantages: a rock-solid work ethic and four to five decades of life experience which give them a great sense

of economic rhythm.

Paula, a 58-year-old Hudsonville woman, is proving exactly those things to herself by enrolling at Grand Rapids Community College.

She is undertaking a 2-year course in Occupational Therapy — quite a transition from life-long career as a Payroll Clerk in her family's agricultural business.

At first, she found the idea of any transition at her age to be utterly intimidating.

Yet something had to happen. The family's business was dying with the downturn of West Michigan's economy. So, overcoming her inner fear, she took a trip to Michigan Works! Once there, she amazed herself by achieving a Bronze National Career Readiness Certificate through scores on the agency's WorkKeys assessments.

Further assessment opened her eyes to interests she never realized she possessed; Then came some personal career exploration with a little help from her Health Care Career coach and a lot of encouragement from her husband.

The research helped her discover her interest in and aptitude for the new field. With it came the realization that she was fully capable to undertaking this change of course in her career.

It helped even more to find that she qualified for financial help at Michigan Works! to help her pay for tuition and books — her dance lessons, one might say.

## STEPPING IN TO THE ECONOMY

Sonya – November 2008

*So, she will, however, be firmly on the first rung of a ladder in what could turn out to be a stable life-long Career in the Health Career industry.*

You could say that, for Sonya, mere existence was a tight fight with a very short stick.

This 36-year-old Holland woman had lost her job and was divorced. She was the sole provider trying to rear twin sons and her only source of income was not even part-time Home Health Care work — for perhaps six hours a week.

Simply trying to put food on the table for two 7-year-olds was verging on the impossible.

Fortunately for Sonya, she paid a visit to Michigan Works! where she discovered the aptitude, talent, fit, skills and interests for possible employment as a Certified

Nurse Assistant (CNA).

What had been an unfortunate set of circumstances suddenly began working in her favor.

She qualified for Michigan Works funding to pay for training starting November 1<sup>st</sup> at Muskegon's Stepping Stone Medical Training Center.

Presuming she lands a full-time job as a CNA, life still will be no bed of roses for Sonya and her sons. The career ladder (path) that was discovered through the sessions in the Health Care Coaching process opened her eyes to career possibilities. So, she will, however, be firmly on the first rung of a ladder in what could turn out to be a stable life-long Career in the Health Career industry.

## GAS STATION TO BILLING OFFICE

Suzanne – November 2008

*She was describing her trapped feeling to a friend one day and the friend did her a huge favor: called her attention to the federal No Worker Left Behind program available at Michigan Works!*

Suzanne, a 29-year-old Holland resident, says she felt as if her job as a filling station and convenience store clerk were like that of a boulder in the midst of a white-water rapids.

It was the same story daily: coping with rushes of rushing gasoline customers, rushes of rushing Frito and jerky delivery drivers, rushing between rushes to place gasoline orders and update candy bar and bottled water inventory, rushing to put up new marketing signs and remove the old ones, rushing to change prices on the pump computers, rushing to keep the coffee urns filled, mop the floor, clean the restrooms, empty the gas pump

trash cans, clean handprints off door glass . . . not to mention the lurking fear about armed robbers.

. . . And then after it all, somehow, trying to maintain a sane home for herself and her daughter.

She was describing her trapped feeling to a friend one day and the friend did her a huge favor: called her attention to the federal No Worker Left Behind program available at Michigan Works!

She visited Michigan Works! and achieved a Bronze National Career Readiness Certificate and — in further assessments and coaching — was shown to be a good fit for training as a Medical Billing Specialist. She qualified for funding to pay much of the cost of the 9-month training program in which she is now enrolled at the Thompson M-TEC Center north of Holland.

Should she land a job once she finishes training, the work at first will seem hyper busy. But anybody who can handle a shift at a convenience store soon will master the ins and outs of Health Care Billing. And, with no need to check the window squeegee fluid reservoirs, or to worry about armed robbers.

## CLAWING BACK FROM ROCK BOTTOM

Carolyn – December 2008

*You might not say Carolyn now as giddy as a school girl. But Health Care Career coaching certainly helped her rediscover a sense of personal purpose and the enthusiasm that goes with it.*

For the first time in years, Carolyn — a 50's-something mother of two — says she sees hope and a future . . . and is happy as she takes the first steps into that future.

In a painful divorce during the last decade, this Holland native lost almost everything — her home, her little business as a housekeeper, her emotional health — everything but the children who depended upon her.

Afflicted by deep depression that stifled her initiative, she felt trapped and backed into a corner. She couldn't face returning to school, believing herself too old to focus upon, let alone manage, the studies for some kind of new career.

Indeed, Carolyn could barely afford the dual medications for her depression which, at one point, approached dismal depths. Basically, she was dependant, literally moving to live from one friend to another.

At last, however, thanks to those friends' urging, the advice of a minister plus some outside professional counseling, she learned about the federal No Worker Left Behind program available through Michigan Works!

Applying to enter the program, Carolyn undertook assessments which enabled her to enter the program for Health Care Career coaching.

The two – week process revealed that, without realizing it, her experience as a housekeeper was a substantial asset. She achieved high scores as a potential Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), a position which might well mean returning to familiar ground: work in people's homes.

Moreover, thanks to the guidance she received, she was excited to successfully apply for financial assistance for training to earn her Nurse Assistant Certification.

Since then she has qualified admission to the CNA program at M-TEC in Holland where she will begin class work in February.

You might not say Carolyn now as giddy as a school girl. But Health Care Career coaching certainly helped her rediscover a sense of personal purpose and the enthusiasm that goes with it. She's found, too, that — when it comes to study — being in your 50s is often an advantage: your ability to focus often is superior to that of giddy schoolgirls.

## RECOVERING FROM A MULTI – DISASTER

Julia – December 2008

*In December, she received her No Worker Left Behind educational voucher and began training at the Everest Medical Campus in Grand Rapids. Next step: her new career.*

For Julia, 2007 was a very bad year, but it looks as if 2009 may be the start of the road back for her and her family.

By way of background, Julia and her husband had carved out a nice life for themselves and their three children in Fennville. Julia was commuting to work on the southeast side of Holland. She was a machine operator who had been with the company 18 years. She loved her job and liked her co-workers and her employer.

Unfortunately, the slowing economy struck the office furniture industry and, on May 7, 2007, Julia was laid off. And that was the start of a long, hard time.

Not long after that lay-off, Julia sustained major injuries — multiple fractures including a severe skull fracture — in an auto accident. .

It meant several months of hospitalization and a slow, painful recovery. And no sooner did she return home, than she had to resume going to the hospital — this time to visit her husband and children, all of whom had been injured in yet another accident.

The dual wrecks, long hospitalization, therapy and loss of work wrecked the family's finances, leaving them dependent upon relatives.

A year after her accident, however, Julia learned of the No Worker Left Behind program through which, in turn, she heard of Health Care Career Coaching. Thanks to a series of paperwork delays, she was unable to enter Health Care Career coaching until October — a long, frustrating time which might have discouraged other people.

Toughed by her misfortunes, however, Julia was persistent, making herself a near-permanent fixture in the lobby at Michigan Works! until she entered the program. Once there, her assessments revealed to her as qualified for the position of Medical Assistant.

In December, she received her No Worker Left Behind educational voucher and began training at the Everest Medical Campus in Grand Rapids. Next step: her new career.

## BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIER

Karen – December 2008

*Her scores indicated she had the aptitude and drive to become a Medical Office worker and she applied for education funding through the No Worker Left Behind program.*

It's goes without saying that a single mom without training is butting her head against a steel-reinforced concrete wall, and Karen seems — or, for a time, at least seemed — to be living proof of that hard reality.

Karen, a Holland resident, is a mid-20's high school dropout who had found a decent job as a teen. But then over the past two years she lost six jobs in succession either through business closings or lay-offs.

She and her little daughter were clothing themselves though Goodwill and making ends meet on food stamps.

Knowing that her lack of a high school diploma was a handicap, she took courses for her GED examination and

passed it.

She then sought inclusion in the No Worker Left Behind program and was able to participate in the Health Care Career coaching.

Her scores indicated she had the aptitude and drive to become a Medical Office worker and she applied for education funding through the No Worker Left Behind program.

That's when it came to light that the record of her successful GED exam was lost.

Now Karen proved that she was nothing if not persistent. She took her GED training and examination all over, passing again with flying colors.

This success, in turn, opened the gates for tuition funding.

She began her Medical Office training at Grand Valley State University's M-Tech Center in January.

Upon completion of her studies, she will put to use the additional coaching and practice she has undertaken in job research, resume development and job interviews.

Breaking through the wall may not exactly be a piece of cake, but Karen now feels she knows where the jobs are has the tools to penetrate to them.

## A HARD ROAD HOME

Naomi – December 2008

*Her job research — a central component of Health Care Career coaching — showed that she probably would be successful as a health care Billing and Coding Specialist...*

It was a bitter pill, but late in the 90s, Naomi and her ailing husband had to return to Holland to live with her parents.

She had been laid off from her position as an advisor at the University of Michigan admissions office. Her job subsequent searches in southeast Michigan — while simultaneously nursing her husband — had been fruitless.

Once back in Holland, however, things began looking up for a time.

Naomi landed a good job at the local library and — despite her husband's medical bills — her earnings were

beginning to get her little family back on its financial feet.

Then, it was her turn to be stricken by illness.

She was afflicted by chronic debilitating pain which forced her to leave work and which, subsequently, turned out a symptom of a life-threatening disorder.

Fortunately, she recovered, but the medical bills had been piling up doubly quickly and she needed an income stream badly.

Last autumn, Naomi discovered the No Worker Left Behind program which, in turn, led her to Health Care Career coaching.

Her assessments for Health Care Careers registered high scores in Health Information Technology.

Her job research — a central component of Health Care Career coaching — showed that she probably would be successful as a Health Care Billing and Coding Specialist, a critical staff position in every clinic, hospital and medical office.

She applied — again, as part of her personalized coaching — for a funding voucher to enroll in Grand Valley State University's health care Billing and Coding training and certification program.

Naomi started classes in December and is slated to complete her certification in 2009.

Meanwhile, in accord with her coaching, her job research and targeting already is under way.

## A CRITICAL PERSONAL DISCOVERY

Sandy – December 2008

*Perhaps the most important component of Health Care Career Coaching is its heavy emphasis upon helping the client discover or rediscover a sense of purpose in life.*

Perhaps the most important component of Health Care Career Coaching is its heavy emphasis upon helping the client discover or rediscover a sense of purpose in life.

These are emotions which no agency can instill, but which the client must find for himself or herself through personally acting upon the results — often surprising results — of personal assessments.

Sandy, a Holland woman in her mid-30s, is such a case. She recently felt as if her life had been transformed from a drifting, hopeless, purposeless existence from which there was no escape.

She was a dislocated housewife trying to cope with severe depression. She was dependent upon public assistance and in a program for the homeless. She could find no work to support her three children — all under 11 — other than toiling part-time in a fast-food restaurant.

Her self-esteem was hovering just about at zero.

Her personal assessments conducted through Health Care Career coaching, however, revealed something literally amazing to her: that she had the values, aptitude and interest which probably would make her a good candidate as a Medical Assistant.

The question was whether she had the perseverance to do the academic work and to seek employment once she completed it.

According to her coach, Sandy has been made new by learning of her aptitude and her subsequent research into Medical Assisting and what it could mean for her and her kids.

She was delighted to qualify for financial aid to undergo training at Ross Medical. The training was tough for her, but her coach said she now is a driven person possessing persistence with capital 'P'.

She now is in full-time job search in West Michigan and, so driven is she, that she has discovered job opportunities in Indian and may just move there to pursue them.

## FINDING THE RIGHT PRESCRIPTION

Dave – December 2008

*Further assessment showed that his aptitude, experience and interests would make him a great fit as a Certified Pharmacy Technician: a position with many openings in hospitals, clinics and chain pharmacies.*

Dave is one of those people who seem to have been able to transform a long nightmare into something more like a dream come true.

The nightmare began in 2005 with the kind of event that would bring sweat to anybody's brow.

Dave was laid off in his mid-50s, well into his seventeenth year of tenure, and with a son in college.

He is a nimble sort of guy, promptly seeking and finding work as a full-time Mortgage Specialist.

That posting lasted into 2006 when the incipient housing slump put Dave back into the unemployment lines.

At that point, his past employer — then undergoing restructuring — called Dave back to work...for 10 whole days. It seems that his call-back was due to “an unfortunate budget error.”

Recovering from that blow, Dave last year found work for a time with a pharmacy chain, but was laid off again when the previous employee returned to the job.

Not long afterward, Dave had to break the news to his son that it had become impossible to sustain his college tuition.

And just when it seemed things could become no worse, Dave's wife was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Dave sought help through the No Worker Left Behind program at Michigan Work! and, through Work Keys assessments and careful screening, became a client of Health Care Career Coaching.

Further assessment showed that his aptitude, experience and interests would make him a great fit as a Certified Pharmacy Technician: a position with many openings in hospitals, clinics and chain pharmacies.

Dave currently is pursuing certification through Thompson M-TEC in Holland.

The lives of real people were impacted and their heartfelt stories captured thanks to the efforts of the West Central Health Care Regional Skills Alliance and the partnership between Alliance for Health, Career Calling, LLC, Grand Rapids Community College and Metrics Reporting, Inc. For further information please contact one of the following:

## Alliance for Health

Craig Nobbelin, Regional Skills Coordinator

[craig.nobbelin@afh.org](mailto:craig.nobbelin@afh.org)

(616) 248-3820

## Career Calling, LLC

Susan Blair, CPCC

[susan.blair@metricsreporting.com](mailto:susan.blair@metricsreporting.com)

(269) 857-1145

## Grand Rapids Community College

Rachael Jungblut, Program Director WIRED WorkKeys Innovation

[rjungblu@grcc.edu](mailto:rjungblu@grcc.edu)

(616) 234-3623

## Metrics Reporting

Lee Payne, Director of FC3 and Boot Camp for Jobs

[lee.payne@metricsreporting.com](mailto:lee.payne@metricsreporting.com)

(231) 740-9707

Eric Heller, Director of Health Care Systems

[eric.heller@metricsreporting.com](mailto:eric.heller@metricsreporting.com)

(616) 644-3190

Bill Guest, President and CEO

[bill.guest@metricsreporting.com](mailto:bill.guest@metricsreporting.com)

(616) 430-0828

[www.michiganrc.org/fc3](http://www.michiganrc.org/fc3)