ECHOES

A SEMIYEARLY PUBLICATION
REFLECTING
THE
INTERESTS,
OPINIONS,
AND
OBSERVATIONS
OF THE STUDENTS OF

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER OF WESTCHESTER
YONKERS, NEW YORK
Have you looked in the mirror lately?
Deep down
into your mind and soul?
Do you really know your true self?

One of the secrets of life is to be honestly who you are.
The most successful people
know themselves well,
understand their strengths and weaknesses,
and they can move
in the direction of their best talents.

It has been said that
life is the process of learning to live
with what you are born.
Life, with its ups and downs,
is that wonderful ride we all take.
Take pride in how far you have come,
have faith in how far you can go.

Do not be passengers in your own life;
be the drivers to your destination.

As we begin a new school year,
we would like to dedicate
this issue of ECHOES
to the real YOU.

“Self-knowledge is the beginning of self-improvement.”
Baltasar Gracián (1601-1658)
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**ECHOES**

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Dear Students:

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines self-knowledge as “knowledge or understanding of one’s own capabilities, character, feelings, or motivations.” One might ask the question, why is self-knowledge so important? To my thinking, the more we understand ourselves, why we have the thoughts, beliefs, and values that we have; where they came from and how they influence our behavior and actions, the greater the likelihood that we, and no one else, will have power and control over our lives and destinies.

With great pride and admiration, I read the stories that many of you shared in this publication. The stories and vignettes shed light on the experiences that have shaped and motivated some of you to take control of and change your lives. You talked about your strengths and weaknesses, admitted your peculiarities, and shared many of your trials and tribulations. You also reflected a sense of humor about who you are and what you do. Your self-awareness, strength and fortitude are quite evident. Thank you for facing your truths and for having the motivation, commitment, strength and courage to take charge of and make changes in your lives to create better futures for yourselves and your families.

Be assured that we are all a “work in progress.” It doesn’t matter how old we are or how much experience we have had. There’s always more to learn, improvements to be made, challenges to conquer and success to achieve.

Our success depends heavily upon our choices. The choices we make should start with some level of introspection and understanding of who we are and what it takes for us to get to where we want to go. There is an unfortunate reality that too many of us are not aware of who we really are, and consequently, we do not accept that we need to make personal changes. We repeatedly receive the same feedback from different people and never hear what is shared with us out of concern, interest, or love. We deceive ourselves and suggest the issue is with someone else and not with us. Such attitudes stifle our personal development, progress and success. Look inside first, and to others second. Make every effort to be receptive to constructive feedback and be honest with yourselves.

Lao Tzu, a philosopher of ancient China once wrote “Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power.

We are beginning a wonderful New Year; a year that is full of hope and promise. Take the time to understand yourselves and to make the personal changes that might be necessary in your lives. As the poet William Ernest Henley penned in his poem Invictus, you are the ‘master of your fate and the captain of your soul.’ Your ultimate success is up to you.

Fondly,

Renée Guy
It is important to know and understand who you are so that you can reach your full potential. It is also important to show the real you. Your personality defines who you are, but sometimes you wonder if others see you as you really are.

My major strength is that I am a calm and quiet person. It helps me to keep my nerves steady when taking tests, playing games, and participating in sports. On the other hand, it makes some people think that I just don’t care. My major weakness is that I can be lazy. I find it hard to complete the things that I am required to do. This is the major reason why I didn’t finish high school. I know that inside I have the drive to accomplish all of my goals, so I am working on keeping focused and not letting the distractions of life hold me back. This will show the real me.

*Allyn Dailly, Accelerated GED*

I am a strong, compassionate, sincere, and honest person, but my children and grandchildren define who I am. I believe they are a piece of me.

My strength is my perseverance, and my weakness is for sweets. At my age, I do believe I have accomplished a great deal in this life; however, I truly believe there is always room for personal growth. I have become the person I always imagined I would be. I live a very fulfilling life filled with family, friends, and plenty of laughs. My life is great and to ask for more would be selfish.

*Maria Diaz, EBHC – Level 5*

I see myself as someone who has the potential and drive to make things happen, but I get turned off by the constant criticism and heckling of others. What defines me is my generosity to others. I am encouraging, and I motivate others to be the best they can be at all times. My strength comes from trying to be my best no matter what the endeavor, but my main weakness is procrastination. The real me has been prevented from coming to light because I have left some very important accomplishments until tomorrow, and “tomorrow” never came.

I am working toward my GED so that I’ll be able to advance further in my life. My major goal is to work as a certified nurse’s aide or pharmacy technician. Although I feel that I am living a rich and rewarding life, I still need to reach higher so that I can fulfill myself. I will start by getting rid of the baggage that is holding me hostage. I believe in myself, and I know that I am very close to making my life better.

*Marcia Pitter, GED*

“*Tomorrow is Today*”
The real me is someone who works hard and strives for excellence. Even though there have been times when I have fallen down, I always get up and try even harder. It has been hard to go through life on my own with no one to help, but it has made me stronger. I don’t live a rich and fulfilling life, but would like to. In the past, some of life’s challenges have gotten in my way, but I would like to have security in knowing that I don’t have to worry about paying a bill late or where my next meal will come from. It can be very frustrating but only the strong survive. I have wasted many years, but now I am ready for a change. Everything that has happened in my life happened for a reason - to make me a stronger person. I am determined to become someone that others will respect and admire.

Tawanda Samuel, Accelerated GED

Every day, I learn more and more about the real me. Sometimes I think about how other people perceive me, and if it is the same way I see myself. I believe that I am a perfectionist. Even though I know that I will never be perfect, I can always do better. I want very much to succeed in life, to be an independent woman. I am compassionate, loving, and persistent, and will do all I can to continue to discover the real me.

Margarita Figueroa, EBHC – Level 5

I am a “normal” woman, dedicated to working and taking care of my family. Now that my children are all grown up, it is my time. I want to learn more English so that I can achieve my goal of becoming a certified pharmacy technician.

Every day is a challenge for me because I have many different problems in my home. My mother-in-law lives with us. She has Alzheimer’s Disease. My mind is overwhelmed with difficult situations. I expect to overcome these difficulties and better myself.

Maria Hernandez, EBHC – Level 5
I am a human being, capable of reasoning and defining what is best for me. I have an awareness of my behavior, and I try to improve every day. I know I can do great things in my life, but sometimes I distrust myself about what I can accomplish. I try to do things the best way I can. I am very sensible.

My children are my strengths and my weaknesses, too. I want to study and work hard for them, to give them a good future. If they are healthy, then I am too. I do not think I have reached my full potential. After finishing my studies, I hope to have the job I want. I am determined to learn English perfectly. After all, it is the official language of the United States. I also would like to become a U.S. citizen. I love children. Some day, I would like to work with children who have disabilities such as Down’s Syndrome. If there is great will and enthusiasm, it is never too late to achieve your dreams.

Walquiria Bueno, EBHC – Level 5

I am a warrior that has fought many battles in life, and I will continue to fight all of the adversities that the world throws into my path. God has a great plan for me to finish my education. I will earn my GED and go on to Westchester Community College to receive a degree in substance abuse counseling so that I can help young adults overcome the peer pressure that plagues our society. My story could have been different if I had someone to help me, and I plan on being that person for many others. It is never too late to gain control of your life. At 55, my dreams are just beginning.

Denise Harris, Accelerated GED

I see myself as a very good person, honest and helpful whenever someone needs me. My actions and my responsibility define who I am in society. A good part of me is my honesty and my feelings for humanity. A bad aspect of my personality is that I am intolerant toward people who argue about trivial things. I try to learn new things and help my children every day so that they can become good people in the future. My three children are sweet and very responsible with their studies.

My dream for a better life is to create an organization to help children in need. I am not ready to start on that path yet, but I hope to one day soon.

Arcenidia Valdez, EBHC – Level 6
As time passes on and on, I have come to cope with reality; to enjoy the beauty of life, to enjoy the wonders of nature, and to create my own awareness. This I have searched for to build a strong me in order to deal with the real world. If ever there should come a time when things seem to get out of hand, I will sit down with my thoughts and find my inner self. This I do because I know I will never find all of me in the process of my growing. However, I know that I have searched the most important part of me: my mind.

**Kathy Wilson, GED**

I see myself as a good and giving person. I believe my good nature defines who I am. My family gives me strength and everything I do is to make a better future for them. My husband and daughter have made my life rich and fulfilling by giving me unconditional love for the first time in my life. After I earn my GED, I will enroll in college so that I can reach my full potential. I am ready to spread my wings and fly.

**Elizabeth Colon, Accelerated GED**

I am an insecure person. I don’t feel that I can do great things in my life, but I encourage my daughters to reach for their goals and dreams. I become weak when something bad happens. It is my personality.

I don’t feel I have reached my full potential in everything as yet, but I believe I have reached it as a mother. I consider myself a good mother to my daughters. They are my priority in life.

In the future I would like to speak English very well, and I want to be more self-confident. I do not live a rich and fulfilling life as yet because I have not accomplished the goals I have set out for myself. I would like to go to college so that there will be better opportunities for me and my family.

**Ivonne Guzman, EBHC – Level 6**

The real me is a very private person. I don’t like to expose my feelings to people I don’t know well, but my family and friends say that I am funny and happy. I enjoy being perceived in this way, and I do not worry about what others think of me. This attitude has come with age and maturity. Although I have not reached all of the goals that I have set for myself, I am fulfilled. I have a great support system and know that with time and patience I will be able to reach my full potential.

**Tanya Younger, Accelerated GED**
I am a strong person with a great deal of sensitivity. Sometimes, when something bad happens that affects my family, I cannot forget it. But thank God, I have always had a mentor who taught me to never have bad thoughts in my heart. This mentor was always there to console me when I was feeling bad. This person is my mom. When I cannot get the things that I want or need, I feel depressed. In the past, if I made mistakes in some situations, I didn’t want to continue with them. Now I think very differently. I have to think and act in a positive manner. When I feel down, I cheer myself up. I can do this because I am a strong person.

Yissel Almonte, EBHC – Level 6

I see myself as a hard worker who strives to do better every day in order to reach my goals. My biggest strength is that I was given a lot of hands on training in carpentry from my father. He worked in the union, and I would like to follow in his footsteps. I would also like to build my own house and make enough money to support my family. I have been working very hard to excel in my classes so that I can make the real me a reality.

Ramon Serrano, Accelerated GED

I am an honest, friendly person. I love to help people. I like to see them happy. I love playing with children. I enjoy speaking with older men and women because they are wiser and more experienced than I and they can teach me a great deal. Just like many people, when I am upset, I cry. My goal is to become a writer, and I would like to write the story of my life. I also want to attend college. I will never give up on my dreams.

Ensieh Pandi, EBHC – Level 5

I am a person who wants to be better. I am a little crazy sometimes, too. I want to always be sincere and friendly with other people. I believe I am strong because when I have a problem, I am driven to resolve it. I do many things by myself. I have not yet reached my full potential because I have not achieved all that I dream of. I would like to become a good man, a good father, a good professional, and a better person. I also would like to be a good husband and son. I am grateful for my wonderful life. It is a rich and fulfilling life mostly due to the fact that God is in it. I can study, work, and be independent. I have a wonderful family, good teachers, and great friends in this school. I feel I can go to these people for advice and guidance when I need it. I am thankful and optimistic.

Juan D. Pena, EBHC – Level 5

I am a hard working person who strives to be better. I am a mother, and I take great pride in my children. After years of caring and nurturing my family, I am now focused on reaching my own goals and becoming the person I see in my mirror: a Pharmacy Technician.

Edith Murillo, EWP – Level 4
Who am I? I am the change I wish to see in the world. I am my ancestors’ dreams. I am my mother’s growing child. I am wilder than I seem. I am reason and rhythm, fire and flow. I am the teacher and the student. I am everything I know. I am the roots that run from no one. I am the seeds. These seeds grow beyond my block and into the future. I won’t hesitate to show what I know, how I got there, and where I will go. As I step into this New Year, 2013, truth steers and I follow.

I would like to be like my father. Sadly, he passed away September 10, 2011. He will always live on in my heart. I am very independent, but it was my father who gave me the power to achieve my dreams.

Priyankaben Patel, EBHC – Level 6

I see myself as a strong and independent woman who knows what she wants in life, and will try her hardest to achieve her goals. I am very trustworthy and responsible as well. My strength comes from my 4-year-old son. Every morning when I look at him, I know that I have to achieve my goals and set a positive example for him. In the future, I see myself as a police officer or dental assistant. I am working toward my GED and then go on to college as the next step to making my career choice possible. I know that I am young, but I have grown up fast, and I will make the best future possible for my son and me.

Janet Degante, Accelerated GED

I am a teenager who is kind and smart. I always try to do my best work in class and to concentrate so that I can learn well. My strengths are that I am smart and well behaved. I feel I am weak when I feel sad about not being okay with things. I also feel that I don’t speak out enough. I remain silent in class very often. One goal is to speak more and interact more with the students in my class. I have not reached all of my goals yet, but I am working on it. I want to attend GED classes so that I can get my high school equivalency diploma. My life is not that rich and full because I haven’t achieved some of my goals, but I am working on changing that.

Efrain Aguilar, EBHC – Level

I see myself as someone who keeps trying to achieve her goals. I define myself as a hard working person who is capable of accomplishing anything. My major strength is that I never give up. For example, when I enrolled in GED classes, I committed myself to attending every day. I work hard to get to class early, finish all of my assignments, and study at home. I am determined to become the successful person I am meant to be.

Yessica Cruz, Accelerated GED
Having the opportunity to be at the EOC has improved who I am overall. Before enrolling in the ESOL program, I had difficulty writing in English and putting a complete sentence together. Now that I am being asked what “The Real You” means to me, I sat down and thought about it. I interpreted “The Real You” as defining what makes me who I am and what I have built around me. This, of course, applies to everyone.

Today I see myself pursuing my dream career. Knowing that with a little effort, anything is possible, I plan to continue until I am fully satisfied with myself. I define myself as being a strong, intelligent woman. In order for me to reach my goals, I first need to know who I am in terms of my strengths as well as my weaknesses. Since starting this program, I have thought about what my strengths and weaknesses were. Although I have not completely discovered them, I know that with a little more time I will. After the ESOL program, I will apply to become a full-time college student, and when I have my career, I will reach my full potential. I would like to be successful in my career. I need to take more steps to accomplish my goals, and I am ready to do so. I have learned that, with time, everything and anything is possible. All thanks to the Educational Opportunity Center.

**Dania Cardona, EBHC – Level 5**

I am an Imam, a teacher. As a teacher, I expect to be a good example for my children as well as my students, especially since I am in a leadership position. Like everyone else, I do have some weaknesses as well. English is not my native language, but I am at EOC working to improve. Now that I am in the US, I try to connect and reach my students in English, but it is not easy. I want to master the English language in order to be more effective in society. With each new thing I learn, I feel more chances and opportunities open up to me.

I love to learn and find the right direction for me and everyone else around me. My wishes and hopes are to be a professor, to have a good life, and to be more knowledgeable in order to be more productive.

**Waleed Elbatrawish, EBHC – Level 6**

I am an immigrant from Ecuador whose life had many ups and downs. I made a lot of mistakes, and experienced heartache and abuse, but my twin daughters have given me the strength to overcome all obstacles. When I look in the mirror, I see a strong and confident young woman for whom life continues to get better and better. My dream is to become a police officer and serve as an example for my daughters.

**Hilda Caicedo, EWP – Level 4**
I am a wonderful human being who was brought into this world under unusual circumstances, but who has been working hard to turn things around. I was born in Haiti to a mother who didn’t want me, and gave me away to be raised by my godmother. Unfortunately for me, my godmother did not want me either, but she kept me. They both said that I was ugly. I started work early in my life. I was a maid in my godmother’s house, and I had to work for my food. My days would start at 4:00AM and end at 10:00PM. I was beaten and mistreated for years. At the age of 15, my godmother left for the US, and I went to my mother’s house. At that point my mother had 6 other daughters, and they abused me too. They did not recognize me as their sister; they said I was “a maid,” and my daily abuse continued.

At the age 18, I thought I had found love for the first time in my life with a young man from the neighborhood. At 19, I was pregnant and gave birth to my son, James. My boyfriend went to America, and at the age of 25, I came to the US as well looking for him. In 1990, we got married, but happiness was just not in the cards for me. Everything here was new and different from what I knew, and I had a hard time adjusting. My new husband did not take good care of me, and I was becoming more and more depressed. In an effort to save myself, I returned to Haiti, and he divorced me.

After some years, I returned to the US in 2009, with newfound optimism. I got a job, and became more confident in my ability to do for myself and my son. He graduated from college, is working as a Radiology Technician, and continues to make me proud. When I look in the mirror today, I see a wonderful, confident woman smiling at me, and I am smiling back. Life is good and worth living, and I know I am worthy of love, respect, and compassion like all other human beings. I am currently working on improving my English because I want to get my GED and even go to college. I have a good man in my life now, who loves me and supports me in everything I do, and I am very happy. Thank God for not giving up on me. As someone who knew abuse first hand, I hope to one day work toward ending domestic violence in the world.

Marie Lalime, EWP, Level 3

I see myself as a brave soul, as a little girl turned adolescent and morphed into a woman. I see my scars and though they do not define me, they remind me of just how far I have come. I wear them proudly. I see a provider, a protector, a parent. I see what God has made me to be. I am a work in progress. What defines who I am are my ambition, drive, and dedication. I accept what I cannot change, move past it, and change what I can. What defines me is more than who I am today; it is who I will be tomorrow and in the days to come. It is the story of my life, and my greatness in progress.

Naimah Randolf, Accelerated GED
I see myself as a strong, independent woman. I have achieved many goals in my life, but I believe there is a lot more for me to accomplish. My greatest accomplishment are my two children. They are my source of strength and pride. However, I want to continue to improve myself and be the best I could be. With this in mind, I am now focusing on improving my English and furthering my education. I am working full-time and I also come to school full-time. I hope that in the future, I will be able to have a managerial position with the company I work for.

_Lourdes, Hernandez, EWP – Level 4_

I am the head of my household, and I make sure that my wife and 6 children are safe, and their needs are met. Sure there are times when I worry and I am stressed, but I am strong and always push myself to overcome difficulties as they arise. I am an immigrant from Yemen, and I am living the American dream: I have a small stationary store with 3 other partners, but I stress over managing the business and my large family. Currently, I am attending English classes at EOC in an effort to improve myself and my chances for a better life.

_Yahya Saeed, EWP – Level 3_

“You are nothing. You will never succeed.” These are the words I constantly kept hearing, and that I actually started believing. I thought I was worthless, a disappointment, and a waste. That was the old me, but ever since I broke out of the cage in which I was trapped, I see myself as a whole new person. I’m stronger, more confident, and a believer. I’ve accomplished things I never thought possible. I got my driver’s license, I became an American citizen, and I’ve helped get my mother her residence.

_Yulisa Andujar, EWP – Level 4_

I really wouldn't have been able to do all this if it hadn’t been for my 2 daughters. They are my pride and my strength. They are the reason I push through, and I am the person I am today. I honestly feel as if anything is possible. There is a saying in Spanish, “Si yo quiero, yo puedo.” The English translation is “When there is a will, there is a way.”

_Jaydi Leiva, EWP – Level 3_

I come from a humble family, and I was born and raised in Puerto Rico. I’m the oldest of 8 children. Both my parents taught me good, moral values, which I follow to these days. After I graduated from high school, I came to the USA seeking better opportunities. I have many dreams. Although I haven’t been able to fulfill all of them, I haven’t given up. I realize that I have to improve my English in order to further advance in life, and I am prepared to do what it takes. If I were to tell you about the real me, I would say that I am a shy person, a hard-worker, an honest person, and an advocate of family values.

_Samuel Velez, EWP – Level 4_

I am a sociable person, but I am also demanding, especially of myself. My strength is my willpower, my confidence, and my willingness to pursue the things I want in life. This does not mean that I am perfect. I strive to improve myself in order to reach my goals and fulfill my dreams. When my English improves, I would like to continue my education and become a hotel administrator.
Welcoming Table: Ms. Liliana Santizo (Eligibility Clerk-Admissions), interns Ms. Jasmin Rodriguez, Ms. Tiffini Davis, and Ms. Enjoli Washington (Jr. Office Assistant)

Students are arriving

Just a quick pose

Students gather for the camera

A group of ESOL students pose with Ms. Ileana Gökçe, Assistant Prof/Chair of ESOL Programs (center), and three of their instructors (L to R): Ms. Janet Yoskowitz, Ms. Auguilda Rosario, and Ms. Ruth Licht

Ms. Brendaa Paiva, Instructor/Chair Dev. & Academic Programs, with a group of GED students

Ms. Alder Davis, Adj. Instructor, with a group of CNA students

MC&B students with Ms. Elizabeth King, Adj. Instructor
A group of GED students

A group of CNA/HHA students pose for the camera

EMT students smile for the camera

CNA students from our Peekskill extension pose happily

DSP students await the student processional

Mr. Del Hillgartner, Server Engineer II and Graduation Marshal, with Mr. Kevin Bailey, Prog. Spec./ Career Services Coordinator

Dean Guy and guests

Alumnus Speaker Charles Barnette with Mr. Bill Ross, Interim Assist. Dean of Acad. Affairs, and Ms. Cynthia Nwizu, Program Administrator
Two students pose with Ms. Malika Richards, Secretary to Dean Guy

Faculty, administrators, and guests get ready for the processional

Faculty Processional

Faculty and dignitaries await the student processional
Students are entering the auditorium

Students take their seats while Jazzmin is playing

Singer Sadae Allen from Jazmyn sings the national anthem
Ms. Alder Davis offers the Inspirational Reading

Welcome and Introductions from Dean Guy

Greetings from WCC Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs, Donald Weigand

Ms. Betsy Stern, Vice Chair of WCC Board of Trustees greets the students

Ms. Colleen Paradis, Director of Operations offers greetings on behalf of SUNY UCAWD

Dean Guy - Reflections
Mr. Richard Lewis, retired Adj. Instructor, is ushered to the stage by Ms. Malika Richards.

Dean Guy offers special recognition to Mr. Richard Lewis for his "stellar" service to the EOC students through the years.

Musical selection by Jazmyn.

Student Speaker, Jazmin Aquino.

Alumnus Speaker, Charles Barnette.

Dean Guy offers congratulations.

Guest Speaker, Rev. Julius Walls, Chief of Staff, Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church, Pres. of Greater Centennial Community Development Corporation.

Warm congratulations from Dean Guy.
Students join Jazmyn in song

Ms. Cynthia Nwizu, Program Administrator, Academic Affairs, presenting the special awards

A happy graduate receives her certificate from Dean Guy

Mr. Bill Ross, Interim Assist. Dean of Acad. Affairs, is conferring the certificates
MC&B graduate receives her certificate

A CNA/HHA student receives his certificate from Dean Guy

WCC Vice President Weigand congratulates a delighted graduate
A warm embrace from Dean Guy

A happy ESOL graduate receives his certificate

Student Speaker receives her certificate from Dean Guy

Mr. Kent Goldwire, Assist. to Dir. EOC Operations, SUNY UCAWD, looks on while the new grads cheer

Dean Guy declares Graduation 2012 ceremony closed

Faculty Recessional
Student Recessional

A happy graduate and her family

Two proud families

What a great speech!

English for Business/Health Careers graduates

A daughter with her pleased mother

English for the Workplace graduates

A proud significant other

Don’t forget us!
My name is Charles Barnette. I was honored to have been invited as the Alumnus Speaker at the 2012 Graduation at EOC, and I am delighted to be given the opportunity to share with the readers of ECHOES my personal journey to where I am at present.

I am 46 years old, and I am the Outreach Supervisor for Project SNUG at the Yonkers Family Y.M.C.A. My life today is a testimony to the fact that age does not matter in making a change for the better in your life. I was born and raised in Yonkers, NY and I graduated from Gordon High School in 1984. I was a basketball star. In fact I was an All County and All City Basketball Star, and I thought I had it made. My life was going to be great, without having to work hard for it. Why should I? I was already a success. However, the reality was very different. There was no “easy money, the honest way,” but still I was determined to find it no matter which way. Unfortunately, the way that I chose was very wrong and it led to my incarceration in 1991. I spent 18 years in the penitentiary. I had plenty of time to think about what I had done wrong, and I was determined to redeem myself.

While in prison, I took advantage of the educational opportunities offered to inmates, and I attended vocational classes in computer literacy and food service. However, when I entered back into society in 2009, I discovered that it was very hard for me to find employment. I concluded that I needed an edge: more education and acquiring new skills. Someone had recommended to me the EOC of Westchester, so in the fall of 2009, I came to EOC and enrolled in the Medical Coding and Billing program. I can honestly say that EOC saved me. I received not only a first class education, but the kind professionals at EOC taught me to trust others and myself, and adjust back to society. I learned not to always look over my shoulders with anticipation of how I might have to re-act, but rather focus on how I should act, and what my actions would tell about me. I could not change the past, but I wanted to change the course of my life in the future.

In March 2010, I completed the program; however, I discovered that I was not free from my past. Despite having been employed, my job offer was rescinded because I could not work in a hospital or a doctor’s office with a criminal record. So, I returned to EOC and enrolled in the Microsoft Summer Institute offered through the ATTAIN Lab at EOC, and became certified as a Microsoft Office Specialist. Many of the skills I learned in the MC&B program in combination with my sharpened computer skills gave me the confidence I needed. I knew I would become employed soon, and I was. In October 2010, I got employed by the Yonkers Family Y.M.C.A., and my life changed.

After I trained in Chicago for a couple of months, I was given the position as Outreach Supervisor for Project SNUG (guns spelled backwards). I supervise a staff of 6, and together we help high risk young adults from the age of 15 to 30 to deal with conflicts without violence. We try to teach them the life skills I learned at EOC: to respect and trust authority, to develop interpersonal skills, and how to interact with peers. We also teach them anger management, how to cope with stress, and how to make better choices in life. For the first time in my life, I feel useful, and I take pride in what I do. I help make a difference in other people’s lives.

I would like to express my gratitude to EOC and to the Yonkers Family Y.M.C.A. for giving me the chance to transform my life. Every day, I am reminded how precious life is, and that it is important not to waste any minute of it. I lost 18 years of my life, but I am determined to make the rest of my life matter. I am humbled by the struggle of others as I try to help them break the cycle of violence and turn their lives around.

My advice to the readers of ECHOES is to work hard, apply themselves, and pursue an honorable life. No matter what kind of work, honest work does pay and it brings respect.
My name is Melissa L. Matthew, I am a former graduate from the CNA evening program at Educational Opportunity Center of Westchester, and I am honored to have been invited to share my personal story with the readers of ECHOES.

In 2011, I found myself in transition; I had lost my job as a customer representative for a photo studio, which in turn resulted in my losing my apartment and having to move in with one of my daughters. I tried to find another job, but times were tough, and not many employers were hiring. I had no choice but to go on public assistance. I came to the realization that I needed to acquire some additional skills in order to become more marketable, so I came to the Educational Opportunity Center of Westchester in September 2011. One of my daughters, Quiana Smith, had graduated from the CNA program at EOC in 2001, and she recommended the school highly.

It is interesting how life works in such mysterious ways. Although I come from a family of several generations of health care providers, a great aunt, several cousins, and my very own three children, I did not seek this profession for myself. After the placement test, however, it was clear that the program I was going to be accepted in was Certified Nurse Assistant, and I happily embarked on a new journey. If God or Fate had selected this field of study for me, then I was going to do my best and follow my fate. I attended classes regularly, studied hard, completed the courses, did my clinical, and passed the licensing tests. While at EOC, I also took advantage of the opportunity to become certified in Microsoft Word through the ATTAIN Lab’s Microsoft Summer Institute. I had always been good with computers, but I wanted to sharpen my skills in this area as well. I attended classes regularly, and passed the certification exam. In June 2012, I marched proudly with my classmates to receive my CNA certificate, and I was determined to turn my life around and get off public assistance.

Shortly after graduation, I returned to EOC to participate in a job fair held by Medical Staffing Network. I was interviewed. Two days later, I was subjected to a clinical skills evaluation, and finally, I was offered employment and was scheduled to start in July 2012. To my delight, I had been hired straight off to work in a hospital, the Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, NY. Usually, CNA’s start by working in a nursing home, and after acquiring some experience and improving their skills, 1 – 2 years later, they hope to transfer to a hospital setting. I am working for the Pediatrics Department of Maria Ferrari Children’s Hospital as a Patient Care Technician. I work with post-op patients, children from infants to teens, and I assist them with their recovery. My job is demanding both physically and emotionally, but I love what I do. I am making a difference in other people’s lives, I am appreciated, and I feel rewarded. I now understand that health care is a calling, and it must be running in my blood. I regard this as just the beginning of my journey. I would like to continue my education at Westchester Community College to become an LPN and later possibly even an RN.

I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to EOC for helping me find my true calling. My advice to the readers of ECHOES is to persevere in their quest for their dreams, and not let anything stop them from being their best and fulfilling their real potential.
My name is **Mauricio Henriquez**. I am a first generation Ecuadorian American who was born and raised in Yonkers, New York. My parents have very old school values and were very disappointed when I dropped out of high school in the 12th grade. I found myself hanging out on the streets with the wrong crowd, and thought I was too smart to listen to the advice of the adults in my life. I did not realize the value of an education until I tried to get a job and was turned down by many businesses because I did not have a high school diploma.

I learned about the GED program at the Educational Opportunity Center of Westchester through my guidance counselor at Saunders High School, and I started classes in the fall of 2004. I took GED classes at the EOC during the evening sessions and was very frustrated at first. I realized that I did not remember a lot of the math and English I had learned in high school, and I had to spend a lot of extra time studying to catch up. With the encouragement of my teachers and a lot of hard work, I passed my exam on the first try and I graduated from the GED program in 2005.

While I was in school, I started working part time at a company called Tri State Fire Prevention. I worked in the field installing duct work and performing grease removal. I liked my job, but I knew I wanted more out of life. So, I decided to further my education, and I started taking business classes at Bronx Community College. When my boss found about my goal to one day run a business, he offered me an internship working in the main office, and I learned all of the business computer programs. As my skills increased, I profited from the positive reinforcements given to me at the EOC and knew that there was nothing that could stop me. Due to the new found confidence I acquired at the EOC, I was determined to prove myself and leave my mark on the world.

I was quickly promoted to a management position, and I was able to name my own salary. I stayed in this position for 8 years, and when the owner of the company retired, I made a huge life choice to become my own boss. With the help of a partner, I began my own company named New York Quality Exhaust Systems. It was established in 2010 and I am now servicing commercial exhaust systems throughout the tri state area. My largest account involves servicing the exhaust systems of all of the International House of Pancakes in the area. I’m the proud employer of seventeen workers who have been able to better their lives through full time employment with benefits. I have not only been able to pull myself from the brink of poverty, but have also bettered my community in the process. I still reside in Yonkers, but I have been able to move to a better section of town, and I plan on continuing to grow my business.

Looking back, I should have listened to my parents’ advice to stay in school, but it is never too late to get back on the right track. My advice to current students is to take advantage of the services available at EOC, and the caring professionals who are ready to help every step of the way. They will help you achieve your goals. Do not allow prior failures and disappointments to stop you from fulfilling your dreams and becoming the people you were meant to be. Be that wonderful and successful person you see in your mirror!
**THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

*Dominican Style Black Beans*

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**DIRECTIONS:**

**To Pre Boil Dry Beans:**

Bring the 8 cups of water to a boil, add the beans and simmer in medium-low heat until cooked. About 1 hour. Check for tenderness by eating a few beans. They are done when they are al dente, a bit firm, yet eatable. Set aside, or refrigerate in their juice/water until ready to cook. (can be frozen, if you choose to freeze break it into portions 2 cups each to serve 4 people)

**To Make the Sazón:**

1. Clean the peppers by removing their centers
2. Roughly chop up the peppers, and onion
3. Add the garlic cloves (skin removed), peppers, onion, and cilantro into a food processor and chop
4. Keep processing until it resembles a finely chopped salsa
5. Refrigerate until ready to cook

**To cook Dominican Style Beans:**

1. Defrost 2 cups of your pre boiled black beans
2. Heat a medium size sauce pan on medium-high heat
3. Add the cooking oil, chicken bouillon, and 3 tablespoons of the sazón
4. Heat for 2 minutes
5. Add the pre boiled beans & their juice, 1 cup of water, Spanish olives & their vinegar, tomato paste, plantain, and cilantro sprigs
6. Boil until the sauce thickens and plantain is cooked, about 15 minutes
7. Serve over rice, or eat alone

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**Cook Time:** 1 hour, 20 minutes

**Yield:** 4

**Serving Size:** 1/2 cup cooked

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 bag of dry black beans
- 8 cups of water
- 1 small green pepper
- 1 small red pepper
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 small white onion
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1 chicken bouillon
- 2 cups of the pre boiled beans
- 2 tablespoons of Spanish olives & their juice (vinegar)
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 medium plantain, peeled and diced into rounds
- 3 sprigs of cilantro
L little Johnny rushes home from school. He
invades the fridge and is scooping out some cherry
vanilla ice cream when his mother enters the kitchen.
She says, “Put that away Johnny! You can’t have ice
cream now. It’s too close to supper time. Go outside
and play.”

Johnny whimpers and says, “There’s no one
to play with.” Trying to placate him, she says, “OK,
I’ll play with you. What do you want to play?” He
says, “I wanna play Mommy and Daddy.”

Trying not to register surprise, and to further
appease him, she says, “Fine, I’ll play. What do I
do?” Johnny says, “You go up to the bedroom and lie
down.” Figuring that she can easily control the
situation, she goes upstairs.

Johnny, feeling a bit cocky, swaggers down
the hall and opens the utility closet. He dons his
father’s old fishing hat. As he starts up the stairs he
notices a cigarette butt in the ashtray on the end table.
He picks it up and slips it in the corner of his mouth.
At the top of the stairs he moves to the bedroom
doorway.

His mother rises up and says, “What do I do
now?” In a gruff manner, Johnny says, “Get your butt
downstairs and get that kid some ice cream!”

“I hate this dull town!” a ten-age boy
complains to his parents. “I want action. I want to
make real money. I want to meet pretty women. I
can’t do any of that here, so I’m leaving!”

Before he gets down the street, his father
calls out to him. The boy shouts back, “Don’t try to
stop me! My mind is made up!”

“I’m not trying to stop you!” the man yells.
“I want to go with you!”

There is a new garlic diet around. You don’t
lose weight, but you look thinner from a distance.

A woman walks into a bank and says to the
lending officer, “I’d like to talk to you about a loan.”
“Great!” the banker replied. “How much can
you give us?”

The patient sitting on the examination table
told the doctor, “Gee, those oysters I ate don’t seem
to be agreeing with me.”

“Were they fresh?” the physician asked, as
he palpated the man’s stomach.
“‘I’m not sure.”
“Well, how did they look when you opened
the shells?”
“Opened the shells?”

Steve, a lonely bachelor, wanted some
company, so he bought a centipede and a small box
for it to live in. That evening, he decided to go out.
“Want to grab a drink?” he asked the centipede, but
there was no answer from the box. A few minutes
later, he asked again – still no reply. Finally, he
hollered, “Hey! Do you want to get a drink?”
“I heard you the first time!” said a small,
irritated voice. “I’m putting on my shoes!”

A woman walked up to a little old man
rocking in a chair on his porch. “I couldn’t help
noticing how happy you look,” she said. “What’s
your secret for a long happy life?”
“I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day,” he
said. “I also drink a case of whiskey a week, eat fatty
foods, and never exercise.”
“That’s amazing,” the woman said. “How
old are you?”
“Twenty-six!” he said.

Two guys are out drinking when one of
them falls off his barstool and lies motionless on the
floor.
“One thing about Fred,” his buddy says to
the bartender. “He knows when to stop.”
As the stranger enters a country store, he spots a sign: “Danger! Beware of Dog!” Inside, he sees a harmless old hound asleep in the middle of the floor.

“Is that the dog we’re supposed to beware of?” he asks the owner.

“That’s him,” comes the reply.

“He doesn’t look dangerous to me. Why would you post that sign?”

“Before I posted that sign, people kept tripping over him.”

Three young boys are boasting about their grandfathers. “My grandpa is a great swimmer!” says the first. “He can swim for hours!”

“That’s nothing,” says the second. “My grandpa goes swimming at six in the morning every day and doesn’t get out till six at night.”

“Big deal!” smirks the third boy. “My grandpa started swimming in this pond 20 years ago, and he still hasn’t come out!”

If God had texted the Ten Commandments to Moses:

1. nol b4 me. srsly.
2. dnt wrshp pix/idols
3. no omg’s
4. no wrk on w/ end (sat 4 now; sun l8r)
5. pos ok – ur m&d r cool
6. dnt kill ppl
7. :-X only w/ m8
8. dnt steal
9. dnt lie re: bf
10. dnt ogle ur bf’s m8. or ox. or dnkey. myob.

A real estate agent wrote an ad for a house she was listing. The house had a second-floor suite that could be accessed using a lift chair that slid along the staircase. Quickly describing this feature, she inadvertently made it sound even more attractive: “Mother-in-law suite comes with an electric chair.”

When a patient was wheeled into the emergency room, the nurse on duty asked, “On a scale of zero to ten, with zero representing no pain and ten representing excruciating pain, what would you say your pain level is now?”

The patient shook her head. “Oh, I don’t know. I’m not good with math.”

The day after the Haitian earthquake, a grandmother received a frantic call from her granddaughter in Florida.

“What’s wrong?” grandma asked.

“Daddy’s been called up by the National Guard. He’s going to Haiti,” she said. Then came the tears: “I didn’t even know we were at war with Haiti!”

Ever notice ……..

….that people who say they want to tell you something for your own good never have anything good to say?

….that a dropped penny always lands at your feet, but when you drop a quarter, it rolls 20 yards?

….that people who are wrong seem to talk louder than anyone else?

….that the latest model of anything is the one that becomes available right after you’ve bought the previous one?
CITIZENSHIP NEWS

Rositania Cruz-Grullon, English for the Workplace, Level 3D, became a naturalized United States citizen on July 21st, 2012. The swearing in ceremony was held at the Department of Immigration and Naturalization at 26 Federal Plaza in Manhattan, NY. Rositania also became a registered voter, and cast her first vote in the presidential election in November 2012.

MICROSOFT SUMMER INSTITUTE – AWARD CEREMONY

On November 13th, 2012, the ATTAIN Lab conducted its third annual Microsoft Summer Institute Award ceremony. Twenty-one (21) of the twenty-nine (29) certified participants gathered at EOC on the 6th floor, in the Student Lounge. They were congratulated with short speeches by Special Assistant to Senator Stewart-Cousins, Ms. Symra Brandon, Communications Director, Ms. Christina Gilmartin (representing Mayor Mike Spano), Councilman, 3rd District, Michael Sabatino, and Legislative Assistant, Ivy Reeves. Participants also received congratulatory speeches from in-house speakers: EOC’s Director, Dean Renée Gay and Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs, Maria Boada. Participants were awarded 39 certificates in Excel 2007, Word 2007, or both, as well as certificates from each of the visiting dignitaries. All participants were treated to refreshments and the EOC hospitality.

THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON AND RAFFLE

EOC held its annual Thanksgiving Luncheon and Raffle for our students on November 21, 2012. As usual, it was a great success. EOC staff and faculty provided monetary donations toward a delicious Thanksgiving luncheon as well as seven food baskets, which were raffled off. The students would like to express their appreciation to the “EOC family” for their generosity. This wonderful gesture touched their hearts and ensured that everyone could partake in the Thanksgiving celebration.

EOC ALUMN CONTINUES TO MAKE US PROUD

Our EOC alumnus, Jean Wilker Elysee, continues to make us proud. A former graduate from the Pre-Vocational ESOL Program at EOC (March 2010), who is currently completing his studies in Computer Networking at WCC, Jean was honored with the Max Kahn Memorial Scholarship in 2011. This year, he is the recipient of two (2) awards: The Rice Family Foundation Technology Scholarship and SUNY/Empire State Diversity Honors Scholarship. The Rice Family Foundation Technology Scholarships are awarded to students who have demonstrated academic excellence in a technology or computer-related curricula. The SUNY/Empire State Diversity Honors Scholarships are supported by a grant from New York State with matching funds from the WCC Foundation, and it is given to outstanding students from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. Congratulations!
Employers of EOC Graduates by Program and Job Title

**Certified Nurse Aide and Certified Nurse Aide/Home Health Aide**

- A&T Healthcare
- Advanced Care Staffing, LLC
- Corland Healthcare, LLC
- County Home Care
- Field Home – Holy Comforter
- Medical Staffing Network
- Medical Staffing Network
- New Monsey Park
- Optimal Workforce Solutions
- Optimal Workforce Solutions
- Putnam Ridge
- Sans Souci Rehabilitation & Nursing Center
- The Seabury at Field Home
- Vision Health Care Services
- Westat

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<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>A&amp;T Healthcare</td>
<td>Home Health Aide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Care Staffing, LLC</td>
<td>Certified Nurse Assistant</td>
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<td>Corland Healthcare, LLC</td>
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<td>New Monsey Park</td>
<td>Patient Care Aide</td>
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<td>Optimal Workforce Solutions</td>
<td>Protective Observation Coordinator</td>
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<td>Certified Nurse Aide</td>
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<td>Putnam Ridge</td>
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<td>Vision Health Care Services</td>
<td>Home Health Aide</td>
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<td>Westat</td>
<td>Field Operation Staff</td>
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**Certified Pharmacy Technician**

- CVS Corporation

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<tr>
<td>CVS Corporation</td>
<td>Pharmacy Service Associate</td>
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**Commercial Driver’s License**

- Westchester Ambulette Services
- Federal Express Ground
- Adecco

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<td>Westchester Ambulette Services</td>
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<td>Federal Express Ground</td>
<td>Driver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adecco</td>
<td>Assembly Person/Driver</td>
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**COS/Medical Coding and Billing Clerk**

- Classic Westchester
- Landauer Metropolitan
- Landauer Metropolitan
- Landauer Metropolitan
- Landauer Metropolitan
- Medical Staffing Network
- Montefiore Medical Center

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<td>Classic Westchester</td>
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<td>Landauer Metropolitan</td>
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<td>Landauer Metropolitan</td>
<td>Medicaid Collections Rep</td>
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<td>Medical Staffing Network</td>
<td>Patient Care Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montefiore Medical Center</td>
<td>Customer Services Liaison CMO</td>
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**Direct Care Support Professional**

- The Food Bank for Westchester
- Sodexo, Inc.

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<td>Sodexo, Inc.</td>
<td>Hostess</td>
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**EMT**

- Citywide Mobile Response Corp.
- Hunter Ambulance
- Rent-A-Center
- U.S. Security Associates

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<td>Emergency Medical Technician/Driver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rent-A-Center</td>
<td>Customer Account Representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Security Associates</td>
<td>Security Officer</td>
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**Home Health Aide**

- Atria Senior Living Group
- Family Home Health Care, Inc.
- Neighbors Home Health Care, Inc.
- Optimal Workforce Solutions

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<td>Neighbors Home Health Care, Inc.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Patient Care Assistant</td>
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KNOW THYSELF

Self-Discovery Quotes

“No one remains quite what he was when he recognizes himself.” – Thomas Mann

“What the world needs is more people who know themselves.” – Ron W. Rathbun

“Know yourself. Don’t accept your dog’s admiration as conclusive evidence that you are wonderful.” – Ann Landers

“Resolve to be thyself; and know that he who finds himself, loses his misery.” – Matthew Arnold

“If most of us remain ignorant of ourselves, it is because self-knowledge is painful and we prefer the pleasures of illusion.” – Aldous Huxley

“Study the heart and the mind of man, and begin with your own. Meditation and reflection must lay the foundation of that knowledge, but experience and practice must, and alone can, complete it.” – Lord Chesterfield

“No man is the worse for knowing the worst of himself.” – Thomas Fuller

“Observe all men; thyself most.” – Benjamin Franklin

“Self-awareness gives you the capacity to learn from your mistakes as well as your successes. It enables you to keep growing.” – Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan

“Resolve to be thyself; and know that he who finds himself, loses his misery.” – Matthew Arnold

“Mirrors should reflect a little before throwing back images.” – Jean Cocteau

“The best mirror is an old friend.” – George Herbert

“While one person hesitates because he feels inferior, the other is busy making mistakes and becoming superior.” – Henry C. Link

“Never mind searching for who you are. Search for the person you aspire to be.” – Robert Brault

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” – Eleanor Roosevelt

“Take your life in your own hands and what happens? A terrible thing: no one to blame.” – Erica Jong

“Good leaders learn their specific personal strengths and weaknesses, especially in dealing with other people, then build on the strengths and correct the weaknesses.” – Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan

“There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” – Anais Nin

“The value of identity of course is that so often with it comes purpose.” – Richard Grant

“The man who views the world at fifty the same as he did at twenty has wasted thirty years of his life.” – Muhammad Ali

“I was brought up to believe that how I saw myself was more important than how others saw me.” – Anwar el-Sadat

“Reputation is what other people know about you. Honor is what you know about yourself.” – Lois McMaster Bujold

“The real power behind whatever success I have now was something I found within myself -- something that's in all of us, I think -- a little piece of God just waiting to be discovered.” – Tina Turner

“The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning to work on becoming yourself.” – Anna Quindlen

“Be a first rate version of yourself, not a second rate version of someone else.” – Judy Garland

“Running from your problems is not moving forward.” – Bill Purdin

“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.” – Dr. Seuss