

Building Confidence, Creating Opportunity: Arlet Castrejon

Arlet Castrejon has always been interested in beauty. Growing up, the Community HousingWorks resident often spent her free time doing friends' hair and makeup for proms, quinceañeras, and other special occasions, helping them feel confident while saving money on professional services. Arlet dreamed of making this her career, but didn't know how to get started.

That changed when she visited San Diego City College on a school field trip. Arlet toured the cosmetology facilities and discovered the esthetics program. "I never thought there was school for that. I didn't even know about college." She realized she could pursue a career focused on skincare, facials, makeup, and waxing and immediately knew that's what she wanted to do.

There was one problem: Arlet couldn't afford the professional tools required for her classes. The esthetics program requires students to purchase professional kits and supplies, something Arlet struggled to afford. Without them, she found herself falling behind her peers and had to pause her education until she could secure the supplies she needed. While disappointing, the experience only strengthened her determination to return and finish what she started.

To keep moving forward and learn about more options, Arlet joined Community HousingWorks' Career Pathways program. Through this program, Arlet explored educational and career options, participated in financial education workshops, and learned practical skills such as resume building. The program also helped her visualize what different career journeys could look like and the steps needed to achieve her goals. For Arlet, that exploration helped confirm that esthetics was the right fit. Just as importantly, the program helped reinforce her confidence in the future she wanted for herself.

Then came the opportunity that changed everything: the Sue Reynolds Valor Scholarship. With encouragement from CHW staff, Arlet applied and was chosen as a recipient. The scholarship will allow Arlet to purchase the tools and supplies she needs to succeed in the classroom and complete her program. Looking ahead, Arlet plans to complete her esthetics training and gain experience working in a spa environment. Eventually, she hopes to open a business of her own. "I want to learn first how it is to work with other people and be out in the workforce, and eventually I want to have my own business."

For Arlet, Career Pathways and the Sue Reynolds Valor Scholarship have provided more than educational support. Together, they helped her discover a career she loves, build confidence in her abilities, and overcome barriers that once stood in the way of her success. What once felt out of reach now feels possible. "It means being able to have an opportunity...it's gonna be for something that I really want."



"The Scholarship has given me the confidence to speak up and say how I feel about the career I'm doing, I'm pursuing, and how anything's possible. You could do whatever you want."

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