SKILLUP WORKERS' STORIES

It might be hard, but it's worth it in the end.

Brianna Griffin

BRIANNA GRIFFIN's ultimate goal was to find a career that would make her truly happy. But she didn't know how to get there. "Technology was something that I was obsessed with. I always wanted to have the latest technology. I wanted to understand IT hardware, so I built a computer and took another apart. I knew this was my passion and what I wanted to do; I just didn't know where to go with it."

Working as a custodian, Brianna saw herself doing more, but pursuing a career in IT felt out of reach.

"Technology seemed far away because of where I was currently at. But I was tired of doing the same thing and I didn't want to settle — I wanted better for myself. My father works in cybersecurity and every time he would come home from work he just looked so happy. I wanted that same feeling for me."

READY TO MAKE A CHANGE

Brianna decided to make a change and push forward. She joined the IT support program at Per Scholas, a program she had originally learned about in 2017 but had stopped pursuing for personal reasons.

"I'm glad it worked out like it did.I don't know if I would have been ready to join the program in 2017. It wasn't an easy process because I was working and taking classes at the same time. From 9am-4pm I was in class and then was working third shift from 7pm-5:30am. It was really hard, but I did it. Hard work is in everything I do and I knew I wanted to make a change."

Brianna knew that the IT support program would teach her the software and troubleshooting skills she needed to build the career she dreamed of. So every ounce of the hard work was worth it.

SKILLUP PARTNERS WITH PER SCHOLAS

Brianna also found support through the SkillUp Together Fund Grant, which she learned about on her first day at Per Scholas. She applied for the $1000 grant and received it as part of her training with Per Scholas.

"SkillUp helped me pay my rent a month early, so I wouldn't have to worry about it the next month. This meant that I could leave work early, get some sleep, and have time to study. It helped me out a lot and I'm very grateful to have had SkillUp in those moments."

Having support meant everything to Brianna. Her friends, family, coworkers, and classmates helped her keep going.

"The people around me motivated me to do better. It meant everything to know that I was supported. There were nights when I was so tired and my husband would make me dinner and encourage me to take breaks. My family would call me every day to see how I was doing. My teacher also helped me to realize strengths that I didn't know I had."

NEVER STOP APPLYING YOURSELF

The day after she graduated from the IT support program, Brianna started her new job as an IT Support Specialist.

"I don't believe I'd be where I am without Per Scholas and SkillUp. I never thought it was possible for me to get to this point. I never thought I could reach a goal like this. I'm really grateful; this has changed my life."

As for what's next, Brianna is planning to continue her studies and pursue a degree in IT at the University of Cincinnati. After that, she plans on getting her Master's Degree in cybersecurity and one day hopes to be an ethical hacker for the government.

"There's a lot more that I want to accomplish. This program was just the beginning."

To someone else looking to upskill, she'd say "it might be hard, but it's worth it in the end. Find what you're passionate about and try to pursue it. Don't think that what you're doing now is the final destination. Always keep going and ask questions. Network with different people so you know you're not alone. Lots of people can help you on your journey."