



Student Champion: Theresa Green

Theresa Green learned many things in high school. Above all, she learned that she possessed the strength and resolve to overcome extreme obstacles.

Theresa graduated high school when she was 18, but the road to this milestone was anything but smooth. She gave birth to a daughter at age 14. Then, in her junior year, she spent a month in the hospital battling a serious infection. Also, a learning disability significantly impeded her ability to read. On top of all this, people at school kept telling Theresa she'd never make it through to graduation.

But Theresa is a fighter who refused to quit. She was living with her great-aunt who was cheering her on, and she had a daughter she couldn't let down. She kept pushing herself and finally reached her goal of graduation.

During her high school journey, Theresa not only learned her own ability to persevere; she also learned she had a knack for cooking and really enjoyed it. Says Theresa, "I took a class in culinary arts. We learned to prep and cook for teachers. I loved it!"

Keeping her dream of being a chef in sight, after high school Theresa began studying the culinary arts through the Wilmington Job Corps. In one year, she completed their culinary course and even won their Expo competition. The prize was a scholarship to attend a cooking school in Connecticut, but because she was 7 ½ months pregnant with her son, she had to turn it down. Theresa still appreciates the experience. “I was so excited,” she says. “I got to meet some big chefs!”

When Theresa came to Delaware County Literacy Council (DCLC), she had her high school diploma and a culinary certification, but her inability to read well was holding her back. Theresa needed to obtain the ServSafe cooking safety certification required of all chefs. She struggled with reading the book of safety rules.

DCLC matched Theresa with Volunteer Tutor Maureen Fleming. For three years, the two worked together to get Theresa’s reading increased to an 8th grade level. With her improved reading, Theresa was able to take a focused course and tackle the ServSafe book of safety rules. “If you can read, it’s the key to life,” Theresa declares.

Then, in March 2021, with help from DCLC Employment Coach Wilma Guzman-Perez, Theresa landed a job as a line cook at Maris Grove retirement community. Theresa views this job as a stepping stone. Her ultimate dream is to have her own culinary business.

“I want to own a double-deck food bus and travel around,” she says. “People will eat on the bus! My grandfather and I are working on a blueprint.” She hopes to use catering as a way to earn money to fund her dream. With her proven ability to overcome obstacles and her positive outlook, the dream will no doubt be a reality in the future!

We salute Theresa’s determination and accomplishments and are proud to honor her as the 2022 Student Champion of Adult Literacy.