

From Food Stamps to College Graduate

<http://ivytechnorthcentral.wordpress.com/2012/08/15/from-food-stamps-to-college-graduate/>

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As another testament to how life-changing an Ivy Tech education can be, Tanda Ameling's story details her teenage pregnancy, living on government assistance, and dreams of earning a master's degree.

Tanda's mother never finished high school, so when she graduated from high school, Tanda thought that was as far as she would go her education. At 18, she gave birth to her first child, and life began to center around family and just getting by. But two years ago, Tanda and her four children were on government assistance, and Tanda realized she needed more than a high school diploma to achieve her dreams. Working as an emergency room technician, she was encouraged by a doctor to pursue a college degree.

Tanda started taking classes at Ivy Tech to pursue a nursing degree, but realized that nursing wasn't for her. "I didn't want to settle for a career just because of the paycheck," she says. But it was an instructor who asked Tanda the simple question: "What do you want to do?"

History. Tanda's passion is history. She loves discovering little details, "like unraveling a ball of yarn that's all knotted up." Several instructors at Ivy Tech encouraged Tanda to switch her major and to continue her education after graduating from Ivy Tech, which changed the trajectory of her life.

Tanda feels that Ivy Tech instructors didn't just give her encouragement. Things like essay questions on exams and learning how to research effectively gave her the skills and confidence to consider new education and career paths.

Tanda graduated with an associate degree in general studies in 2012 and is now working toward her bachelor's degree at Indiana University South Bend. But she doesn't plan on stopping there. For a woman who once thought she had come to the end of the road regarding her education, she now dreams of achieving her master's degree and to go as far as she can possibly go, maybe even completing a doctorate.

She followed her dream to prove to her children that life isn't defined by your circumstances. She hopes achieving her education dreams shows her children that "if you strive for more, your life can be exciting and fun.

Perhaps her proudest moment came not at graduation, but when she and her four children were able to get off government assistance. "Not that receiving food stamps is shameful, but I was always embarrassed about it," Tanda explains. Plus, her children saw their mother go from receive food stamps, to making positive life changes, and now no longer needing government assistance.



Tanda Ameling graduated from Ivy Tech in 2012 with an associate in general studies. As a single mother of four, Tanda once needed food stamps but is now off government assistance and pursuing a bachelor's.

When teaching her children all that is possible in life, Tanda focuses on key questions like: What do I want out of life? What can I achieve? Where does my heart lie? “The answers can be found within, but through the educators and support staff at Ivy Tech, those answers became a reality,” says Tanda.

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