



Tuscarawas County Even Start Program helps area adults get a fresh start on life

By Jennifer R. Demuth

Due to the curveballs that life can throw, some teenagers grow into adulthood without graduating high school. For those adults, there's a free program that can help: Tuscarawas County Even Start. For the more than 500 families that have received help to earn GEDs, learn English as a second language, and/or receive assistance in training their children, achieving success is better late than never.

For four of the 10 adults who recently completed the program's class requirements and earned their GEDs, Thursday, June 3, was a day to celebrate, as they participated in their own graduation celebration before receiving their diplomas that evening at the graduation ceremony at Buckeye Career Center in New Philadelphia. Jessica Coe of Tuscarawas, Mary Garcia of Dennison, Roxann Hyde of Uhrichsville and Stephanie Koprivec of Dennison began that morning at Mark's Place in New Philadelphia where they received complimentary hair cuts and styles. After leaving the salon, the ladies were treated to lunch at Pangrazio's in Dennison.

The busy moms noted that it felt good to get a makeover. Hyde hadn't had a hair cut in more than three years, and her hair was long enough to donate to the Locks of Love program which provides wigs to those who battle cancer.

For the ladies, the hairstyle makeover was the cherry on top of the life transformation made possible by the Tuscarawas County Even Start Program, a place where parents can study for the GED test, learn English as a second language, improve reading and math skills, obtain job and computer skills and participate in parenting classes. Transportation to the program is provided, and while parents take classes, their children from infants to age seven attend the infant/toddler program and preschool on-site.

Thanks to the Even Start program at Uhrichsville (Even Start also runs a program at New Philadelphia), the women are on track to improve their lives through new jobs and advanced education. Hyde is a mother of two who just started her first job. She plans to work to save enough money to attend college. "I would recommend Even Start especially for those who have kids and don't think they can get their GEDs because of their kids," explained Hyde. "Without them offering the daycare, I wouldn't have been able to get my GED."

Hyde added that the program has also had a positive impact on her children. Before participating at Even Start, her then three-year-old son had regular temper tantrums which he no longer has. He has also learned a lot. "When we started, he didn't know his colors," stated Hyde. "By the end of one month, he knew them all."

Coe, Garcia and Koprivec agreed, and all are hoping to begin classes at Kent State University Tuscarawas this fall. The students couldn't say enough about the quality staff at Even Start. "They've helped me a lot," explained Garcia. "I've improved my math skills and learned to be a better parent to my daughter. They helped me achieve what I have to do to make a better life for me and my family."

Koprivec noted, "They gave me the confidence I needed to get a better education and a better job. Sharon Stocker (Even Start GED instructor through Buckeye Career Center) was a great teacher. She's there for you when you need her, whether it's school, life, kids or if you just need someone to listen."

The Tuscarawas County Even Start Program is a federally funded family literacy program that is open to any parent or legal guardian of children from ages birth to seven. Cindy Laughlin, program coordinator, said more than 500 families have been helped during the past 10 years. "We want to educate and encourage parents and give them self-confidence to let them know that they really can go out and achieve their goals."

Other county agencies, including the WIC program, OSU Extension Office, Tuscarawas County Health Department and Personal and Family Counseling Services provide monthly educational seminars for Even Start students, and Stocker provides traditional high school curriculum. Stocker said her favorite part of the job is watching the students progress to the level where they can earn their GEDs. "This group of women really seem dedicated to improvement and working to give their kids a better start in life," said Stocker of the current graduates.

For more information about Even Start, call Laughlin at 330-308-9939, ext. 8210, or visit <http://www.tuscevenstart.org>.

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Why are these ladies smiling? Jessica Coe (l), Stephanie Koprivec, Roxann Hyde and Mary Garcia showed off their new hairstyles after receiving complimentary hair makeovers at Mark's Place in New Philadelphia. The four women recently earned their GEDs through the Tuscarawas County Even Start Program, and they participated in a graduation ceremony at Buckeye Career Center on Thursday, June 3.



LEFT- At Mark's Place at New Philadelphia, four graduates from the Tuscarawas County Even Start Program received complimentary hair cuts and styling to help them prepare for the Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) graduation ceremony to occur later on the evening of Thursday, June 3, at Buckeye Career Center.

RIGHT- Receiving and giving back: Roxann Hyde of Uhrichsville displays her donations to Locks of Love while in the process of receiving a complimentary hair cut and style at Mark's Place in New Philadelphia. Hyde was one of six students from the Uhrichsville location of the Tuscarawas County Even Start Program to earn her GED.