

FEATURED PARTNER:

Circles Wyoming

United Way
of Laramie County



By: Andrea, Circle Leader



I graduated from *Getting Ahead* (Circles' twelve-week self-sufficiency workshop) in December 2011 and was matched with my two Allies in January 2012. My husband, three children and I live in Cheyenne. When I came to Circles, my family was in a really hard place and we aren't now, except financially, which we're still working on. Coming to Circles helped me remember that I have other purposes in life besides being a mom - that's still the most important - but that I have other things to offer, too. Remembering this was the first step in building a self-sufficient life for my family.

I got pregnant with my first child in junior high and never went back to school after the birth of my son. Right afterwards, I took a young parent's program and almost got my GED, but I couldn't pass the math test. That was ten years ago and I now have three children.

When I started *Getting Ahead*, I was very quiet. I hadn't been in a group of people like this in a long time. As I got comfortable, I participated more and more. My *Getting Ahead* graduation was important to me. Governor Mead came before the ceremony and visited with our class. When I gave my graduation speech, I surprised the staff and facilitators with how excited I was to share what I had learned and my new goals.

I was matched with two Allies. One works in adult continuing education at Laramie County Community College. She was a huge help in getting my GED. I thought that because my last tests were so long ago, I would have to start over. But my Ally told me that I could pick up where I left off and helped to find my records on file.

My other Ally is a young, single woman who works at the Laramie County Library, has a really large extended family and knows a lot of people in the community. She introduced me to one of her sisters who is a stay-at-home mom with children the same age as mine. Her sister helped me by providing a few hours of childcare so I could concentrate on my GED practice tests.

Since then, I have earned my GED and enrolled in Adelante, a program for low-income parents in high-demand fields that I learned about through Circles. In April, I graduated from this program with a Microsoft certification and a certificate in office administration.

When I came to Circles, my family was really in a hard place. I was depressed. I loved my family but couldn't think how to get to a future where we were self-sufficient. We are still in a hard place financially, but I don't feel depressed or harried. I had a lot of work to

do to set goals and then work on them. Sometimes it was really hard but with the support of my Allies and our Circles community, I am in a much better place today. I have a future to look forward to.

[Andrea is now wrapping up her time as a Circle Leader and has been contributing as a volunteer to make Circles available to other people working their way out of poverty in Laramie County.]

For more information about Circles Wyoming: circleswyoming.org or call 214-1332

A Circles Meeting:

