

KCCF Tutoring Success Story: Christian Sanchez

By Liz Wurster, Correctional Program Manager

The education programs at KCCF are so powerful not only because they statistically lower the likelihood of recidivism - thus improving the post-incarceration experience and outlook not only for the justice-involved student, but for society as a whole - but also because in an environment that in many respects must be restrictive and controlling, we find space to create dreams and skills that may for the first time take root in what heretofore had been infertile ground.

According to Christian, a student in the men's GED class at KCCF, who became a proud graduate in November 2019, his educational experiences before coming to KCCF had left him "quite jaded when it came to educators. That feeling carried over into KCCF's GED program until I got a better feel for who my teachers actually were." At KCCF, Christian was surprised to receive the level of support that his teachers and tutors provided him: "I never had a tutor until this recent experience, so I can't really compare, but I can say having Ali for guidance is a benefit that every other student should have the opportunity of getting." This support opened doors for him that he hadn't initially considered, such as getting his high school diploma (via the HS 21+ program) rather than pursuing high school completion via only the GED.

In his interview, Christian echoed a common sentiment that students express about their educational status when they enter the classes at KCCF: a lack of faith in their hard skills and/or their ability to buckle down and focus. The transformation that can take place within these walls can be eye-opening for our students: "With the extra help I'm proud to say that I did reach my goals. This forward progress feels very rewarding more for the fact that I was able to actually take away more and retain most of what I learned by sheer will and discipline that for so long I believe I lacked."

However, although we provide support towards their educational and professional goals, it is up to the students to take the reigns and put in the time and effort to get there. His Literacy source tutor, Ali, highlights this point, and how that initiative helps students to develop a higher level of self-awareness and follow through, which they can apply on a broader scale in the future: "One of the key components of this program is to help students recognize their own accountability in their education - we provide resources, but they need to do the work. In tutoring, Christian really focused, taking ownership of his responsibility in meeting his educational goals. He definitely has the skills and ability to succeed. It was existing to see him committing to completing tasks and following through, as well as having the self-awareness to recognize how failing to do this has limited him in the past."

Christian was recently released, and he has connected with the teachers at Seattle Central, so we are hopeful he will continue to pursue education (right now he is debating whether to pursue law or a four-year degree in teaching). According to Christian, "I've never considered being a teacher but I've considered it recently after judging the condition of my fellow classmate inmates. It would be cool to have a teacher in jail whose hip to the workings of a correctional facility."

As for his contributions outside the classroom, Christian hopes to return to his former work as a stagehand: "First, because it won't interfere with my schooling and second because it's a foot in the door toward the music industry," about which he is also passionate. Additionally, he is adamant that he plans to "set my sights on providing a positive influence upon release." He'd love to participate in any public speaking opportunities, especially as a chance to give back to the community. For example, he'd like to participate in an event at Literacy Source that would allow him to reflect on and give thanks for his experience with the tutoring program

at KCCF: "I've been blessed by their helping completing my goals while being locked up and I'm a firm believer in repaying love where love is given."

