



Indiana Adult Education Helps Shelbyville Native Rewrite Her Story

After overcoming significant personal and educational challenges, Shelbyville native Christine Strunk accomplished a milestone that once felt out of reach: earning her high school equivalency through Indiana Adult Education (AE). Her journey – from national attention as a high school dropout to preparing for a healthcare career – demonstrates the power of second chances and workforce-driven education.

Christine grew up in Shelbyville, where she left high school at 17 amid difficult circumstances. She recalls that during those years, she lacked the support, encouragement, and stable educational environment needed to succeed, which made staying in school feel impossible.

Those early challenges soon placed Christine in the national spotlight. At 18, Christine was working in a factory and living on her own when she unexpectedly landed on the cover of Time magazine as part of their “Dropout Nation” story, which examined rising dropout rates across the US.

“I didn’t realize the magnitude of it at the time,” Christine said. “I just wanted people to understand what students were going through.”

While the attention came unexpectedly, the obstacles behind it continued to shape Christine’s life. Yet Christine never lost sight of education as the key to her future. Over the years, she tried multiple paths, including online programs and GED classes. However, balancing work, family responsibilities, and raising three children made progress difficult.

Christine found a turning point when she discovered McDowell Adult Education Center, an AE provider approved by the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD). “It really made me forget about all the bad education experiences I had,” Christine said. “It reminded me that it doesn’t all have to be bad and that I could succeed.”

With flexible scheduling, supportive instructors, and programming designed for adult learners, Christine stayed engaged and moved forward. She earned her high school equivalency just two days after her birthday, closing a chapter that had remained unfinished for nearly two decades.

Christine is now preparing to start Certified Clinical Medical Assistant training in February. The program includes hospital clinical rotations, an internship, and places her on a path to an in-demand healthcare career.

Christine's story is already inspiring the next generation. Her oldest daughter, 18, is enrolled in the same high school equivalency program. "Life may get hectic and crazy," Christine reflected. "But don't ever give up. It is never too late."

Indiana Adult Education programs, approved by DWD, offer free instruction to help adults earn their high school equivalency, build foundational skills, and transition into career training and employment. These programs strengthen Indiana's talent pipeline, increase earning potential, and support long-term economic stability for Hoosiers.

"Christine's journey shows what happens when persistence meets opportunity," said Mike Smith, Interim Commissioner at DWD. "Adult Education opens doors for Hoosiers to earn credentials, advance into careers, and build a stronger future for their families."

To learn more about Adult Education opportunities in Indiana, visit <https://www.in.gov/dwd/career-training-adult-ed/adult-ed/>.