

My name is Brandon Alexander. I am a Navy Veteran from the first Gulf War. I am also an alcoholic and unfortunately I drifted from meaningless job to meaningless job. All the while my self esteem and self worth dwindled to a point to where I was just plain ready to give up on life.

I knew I was smart. I knew I could be somebody, but I just couldn't seem to get enough money together to pay for the essentials needed to go to school. Rent, books, tuition, food, bus pass...How can I afford all of that making minimum wage? Even if I worked sixty hours a week I would still come up short. I was doomed. There was no way out of the alcoholic hell I placed myself into.

Comin Home, a transitional housing for veterans, told me about SJEC. I said "Why not? Maybe they can teach me something about getting a better job." So I went an enrolled. Now, being a veteran, I liked the structure SJEC provided. Some others in my class did not. Looking back, those people just walked out on the winning lottery numbers and didn't know it. After I went through the classes, I had a better understanding on what employers are looking for and I also had a better understanding on what I was looking for.

That's when they had me talk with Mr. Robert Chubb. He asked me what would I love to do for a profession. Nobody asked me that since I was in grade school. I said "nursing, that's what I want to do!" He looked at me and said "What did you do while in the Navy?" "Aviation" I said. I loved working on aircraft. Mr. Chubb asked me to go down and talk with Pete Stogsdill at Pima Community College Aviation Technology Center. When I returned I was very pleased to hear that SJEC was going to assist me with everything I would need to go school. Tuition, books, and a bus pass. That was all I needed. I thanked Mr. Chubb and he told me "you'll be great!" Wow. Nobody told me that for a long time. Then I went to see Ms. Cheryl and she helped me find a job. I got a great job with Bed, Bath and Beyond. Perfect for school, twenty hours a week at work and school forty hours a week. Sure, my plate is full but imagine working sixty hours a week to pay for everything SJEC provided. Mr. Chubb then told me about the Salvation Army and their housing assistance program. I talked with Mrs. Patricia Galindo. She has a heart of gold and told me about their program. As long as I work twenty hours a week and get good grades in school, they would pay for my housing for up to two years. So I found a one bedroom, within their price range, close to work, my AA meetings and the bus line to school. Perfect!!

Eighteen months later, with lots of hard work and very little sleep, I graduated from Pima's Airframe and Powerplant Technician Program (A&P). With straight A's I might add. I needed to take FAA oral and written exams, and SJEC paid for that too. At the end of my A&P program, Pima started an avionics program. I was more than interested in taking those classes and becoming the ultimate aircraft mechanic. I asked Mr. Chubb and he agreed. Four months or so into my avionics program many large aircraft companies wanted me to work for them. I declined, wanting to focus on my schooling. Then came along a job that I just couldn't pass on. I had to at least interview. Two days later I was hired. So now I am an A&P mechanic, working on aircraft forty hours a week and absolutely loving it. I'm now making more money than I ever have in any of my past jobs and that's entry level.....pretty cool huh? In five weeks I will be done with my avionics training and have my FCC/A&P/AET certifications.

Two and a half years ago I was ready to give up on life. Give up on myself. Some angel out there told me about the Pima County SJEC and said "give them an honest try, do your best while there to learn what they have to teach you and maybe your life will change. What do you have to lose?"

I am very proud to write this letter. I am very grateful for all the opportunities SJEC gave me; and I will recommend this program to new people I come across in my twelve-step meetings I attend.

THANK YOU!

Brandon Alexander