

Javier Raygoza

Being in the classroom, Javier Raygoza says, was never something he was great at. He struggled academically and was too easily distracted when he was in traditional school. He got into trouble, and finally just quit going to school. He then got arrested for drug possession as a juvenile and things just kept getting worse.

Javier was 16 years old and in Pima County Juvenile Detention when he was given the option of remaining there for some time to come (due to repeated probation violations) or becoming a student at Las Artes Arts and Education Center. Javier chose the latter, and began attending Las Artes as a full-time student in April of 2008. Javier himself would not describe his time at Las Artes as being without obstacles. Academics still did not come as easily to him as to some others and he struggled with maturity issues while trying to meet the “real world of work” expectations of Las Artes.

Javier admits today he came close to giving up, thinking it was too difficult for him to continue. Having to get up early every day, work hard and abide by so many rules, he admits, was the hardest things he’d ever done. But after six months of perseverance, of getting up every morning, working hard every day and doing his best to abide by the rules (and getting a couple of second chances when he didn’t) he graduated from Las Artes, obtaining his GED, in October of 2008.

Some time would pass before Javier says he had matured enough to take the next step. A little over a year would go by before Javier understood what he needed to do to get the kind of job he wanted, the kind he would enjoy, and the kind that would allow him to earn the sort of money he wanted. He went back to Las Artes and together with his case manager, with whom Javier still maintained regular contact, put together a plan for him to attend barber school. Utilizing Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding, Las Artes was able to provide tuition assistance. Javier’s Las Artes case manager was also able to procure additional tuition assistance from available ARRA stimulus funding, and those together would cover most of the cost of tuition for the program that does not accept Pell Grant funding.

Javier began his training in January of 2010 at Dunbar Barber Academy in Tucson. His instructors report that he is on time every day, has excellent attendance and works hard. He’s earning A’s and B’s on all of his weekly exams. Javier says his instructors at Dunbar have taught him a lot and remarked to him that the talent and natural ability he has for being a great barber are something they rarely see in someone his age.

In June, Javier was the keynote speaker at the 2010 Las Artes graduation. He spoke about the obstacles he had overcome while he himself was a student at Las Artes. He urged the graduates to pursue job training or post-secondary education as he had done, telling them from experience that without it the options are limited.

Javier is scheduled to complete his barber training in late October, 2010. He’s already received two job offers from area barber shops waiting to enlist his services.