

Monique 7-10-17

My friend referred me to this job...I was happy because when you have a background, it's kind of hard to enter back into society because everybody's like, "oh, you have a background". So that was pretty cool. I have a 3 year old son. And I do live kind of far away, but I stay out here during the week, because there's more resources here versus being in the Valley. So I come back this way to work, but I live in the Valley, and I go home on the weekends.

The job is pretty cool. On Tuesdays it's inventory and check the vegetables and produce and make deliveries to the people. I did that for the first time last week and I liked it. It took all day, but it was pretty cool, giving back versus just always taking. As far as the garden goes, I'm learning a lot. How to properly plant seeds and when to water and when to not. It's a really good learning experience when you don't know about that. I like it, pulling weeds and everything.

Dee first told me about Dig Deep, and at first I was kind of skeptical, I thought, "You work in a farm? For real?" And then when I saw it was more like a garden, I was just ready to do something different than something like customer service, or telemarketing. Getting dirt under my fingernails is fine...I like it.

The first week I was just shadowing and watching, then the second week I was hands on...I'm still learning. You work at your own pace as long as you get it all done. I like that.

When I was 19 I moved to Tennessee. I'd never been to jail or in any trouble. Nothing. Then I came back and I left again when I was 21. Then I left again and came back when I was 22, and everything went downhill at that point. Trouble after trouble. And it wasn't even my trouble, but just being with the wrong people. It was just a lot. Then I went to prison. I was incarcerated for a year. After that, I said to myself, 'I can't do this', so I started to do more positive things. I went to Merritt College and did the PAC program, and I graduated with a 3.78 in their business and logistics. It was a one-semester program, but we learned a lot. Then I got pregnant, and I was out of work for about a year and a half. Then I had to move to Stockton because my rent in Oakland went too high and I couldn't afford it, so I had to go where I could afford to stay. Maybe two months later, my mom called and told me to fill out an application for a job in San Francisco, so, I do this in the daytime, and at night I work for

another nonprofit organization, Jelani House, it's a drug program. I work there at night from 12 to 8:30, and then I get off and come straight here. And then when I get off here, I go to sleep. So I'm registered to be a drug and alcohol counselor, I just have to take the courses to get certified. Every Tuesday I go to school to work toward that, and I have up to five years to finish. That's pretty much it, and I'm here.

I could be a drug and alcohol counselor, and incorporate this too, because if I get to the point where I want to open up my own program, I'll have ideas for what they can do. Because they have a garden in the back of one of the houses, but it's not being worked. So I could incorporate everything together. Everything kind of works out.

Gardening to me is kind of like therapy. I could have a stressful day, and I come here and I take all my anger out on the weeds! Just pull the weeds...it releases my stress. When you water the plants and you see the butterflies, it's just peaceful. People have rough days...you don't know what people go through day to day, so you kind of have some serenity, some peace. It's a cool environment here, I haven't come to work yet and seen anybody with an attitude, or felt uncomfortable. Planting stuff...it's just...therapy. I like it.