



Ashley Zins
ClarkDietrich
Packer



Story produced by:



Mother of 2 Changes the Narrative

Justice-Impacted Woman Re-enters Through WorkAdvance

A difficult life lesson is transformed into hard work, consistency and a sense of purpose for a Warren, Ohio, mother. Ashley Zins has never held what she calls “typical jobs.” She describes herself as artistic, creative and has worked in manufacturing settings before - including a granite company.

However, she hit a bump that slowed her career journey for a while. Ashley was justice-impacted for OVI offenses, and part of her two-year sentence

was to complete a program at the Community Corrections Association (CCA).

“When I was in jail, I was where I needed to be. I was on a bad path. I felt like God sat me down in there to learn from this,” she said.

A Pivotal Moment

She’s the mother to a teenager and a 21-year-old, and she often worried how being away would affect them.

After a couple of months at CCA, she saw a WorkAdvance flyer. It

ended up sparking a turning point for her life.

“The job coordinator pointed me to it, and I was interested. I ended up filling out an application and got accepted in November of 2022,” Ashley said.

One month later she joined a WorkAdvance cohort with more than a dozen others. Organized by Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition, participants go through technical training and career readiness through the National Center for Urban Solutions and

Eastern Gateway Community College.

“I have always enjoyed manufacturing because you get to make things. I’ll even do little projects in my spare time. My dad always said not to rely on a man to take care of me, and my mom was the same way,” she said.

The First Steps

In March 2023, Ashley completed her sentencing requirements and left CCA. She credits the WorkAdvance opportunity as her motivation.

“I’m just so thankful for everyone. The career coaches still check up on me. The interview classes really helped me with communication. It gave me confidence, and all the support has boosted that. Now, I get to help others in similar situations,” she added.

Ashley was hired at ClarkDietrich, a manufacturer of building products in Vienna, Ohio. She works on the pack line and plans to be there as long as possible.

“I’m hitting all my marks, so far, and bonus money has been a blessing. I have to be there a while longer for apprenticeship consideration, but I plan to do that and work my way up at the company,” she said.

She’s relieved to have a steady income and not be as stressed about money and paying bills. She has also been sober for three years, sponsors people in recovery, gives inspirational talks in meetings and regularly attends them for herself.

“I really believe in karma and putting out the good. You just have to keep giving back. It’s not hard. You have to do the work and keep showing up,” Ashley said.

It’s been a somber reality check when she reflects on everything that happened.

“I could’ve killed someone, and then, seeing how everything affected my kids. I’m thankfully working on repairing relationships with them now,” Zins said.

“I know what I didn’t want. I

didn’t want to die, and I didn’t want to lose my family,” she added.

Building A Future

Now that she’s made monumental changes, the future includes helping others do the same. Ashley will continue working with people in recovery and wants to eventually become a chemical dependency counselor. She’s taking classes toward that end at Kent State University.

One of her long-term goals is to build a better community. As evidence, she revisits WorkAdvance cohorts to tell her story and motivate the participants.

Those who have helped her up to this point are happy to see her succeeding.

“I was impressed right away with Ashley’s desire to have a good job and be active in her community, and I’m glad she’s doing so well,” said Kelly Bancroft, MVMC project manager.

Workforce Ecosystem Players



Industry Sector Partnership



Community-based Organization



Training Partner



Employer

Visit tinyurl.com/WorkAdvance for more information on WorkAdvance.



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