

From Depression and Isolation to Motivation and Education Blanka is a true S.U.C.C.E.S.S. story

At the age of 52 Blanka was working only part-time due to a back injury and on a fixed income which made it difficult for her to receive the proper care she needed. She would soon start to feel disconnected from the outside world and each day seemed harder and harder to face. Blanka stopped going out and remained in her home with feelings of isolation and depression. She eventually sought the help of a mental health care worker at Vancouver General Hospital who recommended a program call the Community Bridging Employment Program provided by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and funded by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development.



Blanka was unsure of what to expect from the program but knew she had to attend in order to change her life for the better. She was relieved to find the program consisted of an open learning environment where she did not feel pressure to be in all of the group discussions but always felt welcome. Blanka said the Program made her realize that “I was not alone and that there were many women like me who needed help. I think every woman should take the program just to experience the feeling of being a part of something or a group that is able to share their thoughts and feelings in a non- judgmental environment.” She goes on to say “this was just

what I needed, if I did not come to the program, I would still be at home feeling down and depressed.”

The program not only offers emotional support, but it provides resources for those wanting to improve their skills or start a new career. Blanka has decided that she would like to help others who have suffered through depression, abuse and/or isolation. She has enrolled herself in High School English in order to complete her diploma and will apply to the Vancouver Community Collage Basic Counselling Program. With an improved outlook on life Blanka is feeling as though “1000 kilos have lifted off my shoulders,” she happily adds “the community group has become part of my family.” Blanka has also enrolled herself in a beginner’s Spanish language course and is learning to play the accordion. I asked her why the accordion? She replied “a piano is much too big to fit in my home, so I thought something smaller would do.”

The Community Bridging Employment Program is a 26 week program designed to assist women who are un- or under-employed or are receiving income assistance and have been victims of violence (family violence, abuse, or sexual assault) that leads them to experience barriers to employment. Individualized services includes; meeting employment and educational needs, goal-setting assistance, workshops on



self-management, job search, and computer skills, work experience placement and individual counselling. The program also focuses on the “healing” component which complements the programs employment-related services where each participant will develop a personal plan.

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