

Chandra Blakely



*Gary Adult High School -- Honors Graduate
Secretary/Bookkeeper, Jefferson Adult and Community School
Hillsborough County Public Schools*

Chandra Blakely is what is referred to as a real “go-getter.” She has overcome adversity in her young life, and is destined to be a true achiever in her chosen profession. She is currently enrolled in the Criminal Justice program at Hillsborough Community College, and she wants to be a prosecutor someday. For now, her schedule is amazingly full – more so than most people her age are willing or able to handle.

Chandra came to Hillsborough High School as a young adult living by herself at 18. Her parents lived in another county (Columbia County), but Chandra wanted to graduate here in Tampa. However, trying to hold down a job and go to school full-time made it difficult for her to complete her class work at her high school, much less be on time and in attendance each day. A time came when school officials said she could no longer continue to attend there because she did not reside with an official guardian or parent. So she was withdrawn, and after doing some research on her own, she found Gary Adult High School. One of the counselors there took Chandra under her wing, and put her into the course she would need to be able to graduate with honors with a standard Florida high school diploma. And she did it! Not only that, but her then-principal told her that he wanted to hire her for a paraprofessional position at Gary, and during her march across the stage at graduation, he told her she had gotten the job.

Chandra worked there until May of 2007, when she accepted a position at Gaither Evening School as their Data Processor. And last August, she joined the staff at Jefferson Evening School as their secretary/bookkeeper. In addition to working, she has completed an internship with the U.S. Attorney’s office in Tampa, and has all but completed her AS degree at HCC (she is lacking one class to graduate.) She has obtained four industry recognized certifications in her chosen field – fingerprinting, crime scene, private security and homeland security – by attending classes on Friday nights and all day Saturday and Sunday. Oh, and did we mention that she is bi-lingual, too!?

Chandra points to her counselor at Gary (Marie Cloutier) as the person in her life she would consider a mentor, and who has had a continuing impact on her life. Chandra is married (for over 3 years) and in addition to working, going to school and being a wife, is now very excited about buying her first house. Chandra is the first-generation, college-bound member of her family, and she is determined not to let anything or anybody stand in her way to that goal.