

SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT:

Vista Adult School sets a student on an entirely new path

By Whip Villarreal

Vista Adult School has helped countless students improve their lives and Juan Flores, 36 of San Diego County, is no exception. Flores once faced numerous obstacles that eventually led him down the wrong path, resulting in a period of incarceration during his teenage years. However, his journey took a remarkable turn as he embraced the transformative power of education, which helped reshape his life's trajectory.

During his time in a residential drug rehabilitation program, Flores realized the importance of turning his life around and decided to use his time there as an opportunity for self improvement. He dedicated himself to education and earned a high school diploma through Vista Adult School in 2014. This accomplishment marked the beginning of his education journey toward a brighter future.

"My experience at Vista Adult was awesome, they helped me and worked with me to make sure I submitted my assignments on time and made sure that I understood the material," Flores recalls. "They gave me the resources and knowledge of programs to help me go to school. Prior to that, I thought higher education was basically unattainable for someone like me who had a background of drugs, violence and incarceration."

Determined to continue his education, Juan enrolled at Palomar College for the next two years, where he not only met the requirements for an Associate's degree, but also discovered his passion for sociology.

"At that time, I didn't understand my situation as a social problem: I was very narrow-minded and very ignorant to a lot of things," Flores explains. "So, education allowed me to really see more than what I was conditioned to see and experience as a person who grew up in a marginalized community. I continued to learn more



After time in a rehabilitation program made him determined to turn his life around, Juan Flores earned his high school diploma and was able to forge a new path for himself. Photo by George Baker

about my situation and I became curious about my lifestyle and that got me to pursue sociology as a student."

His curiosity and persistence in his studies ultimately led him to enrolling into the University of California, Berkeley where he has so far received a Bachelor's degree in sociology. His resilience, combined with the support of mentors and peers, opened up many opportunities he could not have dreamed about prior to his enrollment at Vista Adult School. Flores is currently enrolled in dual Master's degree programs for social welfare and public policy at U.C. Berkeley, furthering his education and working towards a future that once seemed beyond reach. He is on track to complete the dual programs within the next two years.

Flores recognizes that without undergoing rehabilitation and enrolling in Vista Adult School, his current life wouldn't reflect the positive trajectory it does today. He attributes his newfound opportunities for

success to his education, opportunities that may not have been accessible otherwise. He believes that his story serves as a testament to the power of education and self-discipline, advocating that anyone with dedication can achieve their goals.

"It's been long and hard, but nothing comes without sacrifice and I have been able to stay the course," Flores says. "I think if folks are looking for guidance or want to do something to better their lives, it is important to understand where they are at in life and really follow what they want to do regardless of what other people are doing around them."

**Vista Adult School**

To learn more about Vista Adult School, visit www.vistaadultschool.org.