

# A SHOT AT A BETTER FUTURE

## Student turns Vista Adult School phlebotomy technician training into dual career as an instructor and medical professional

By Nicole Carr

When he was 25 years old, Manuel Martinez found himself seemingly stuck in a job he hated. Cut to the present day, and the now-33-year-old Martinez is a certified phlebotomy technician, laboratory lead at Scripps Health and a phlebotomy and externship instructor for the institution that set him on his current path—Vista Adult School.

Before his phlebotomist training, Martinez had worked as a welder for two years. He says the job paid well, but that he felt unhappy and unfulfilled with the work. He heard about Vista Adult School's phlebotomy technician course—where students can prepare to become certified medical professionals trained to perform blood draws—through a friend who had completed the program there.

His friend recommended the school because of the quality teachers and its low-cost relative to other schools and vocational programs, but Martinez says there was still some trepidation before he made the jump: "I did hesitate a little bit, because I didn't know whether I was doing the right thing or not," he says. "But I decided I was going to invest some time and money in myself."

He says the school did a good job of making him feel comfortable with his courses in spite of a lack of previous patient care experience, and that his instructors helped keep him engaged and motivated.

"Those instructors were very kind and nice and very supportive of everything, even when you made mistakes," he says.

Martinez says his three-week externship program with Scripps Health was another

highlight of his phlebotomy education, and that the experience there helped him realize he'd chosen the right path.

After completing his training in 2017, Martinez went on to work for Scripps, and is now the laboratory lead for four sites in the San Diego area. He returned to Vista Adult School initially as a guest speaker, before he was offered the position of phlebotomy instructor in 2022.

As an instructor, Martinez says it is important for him to remember how he felt when he was in his students' position and to let them know he understands what they are going through. In particular, he tries to address aspects that students could find disheartening or difficult.

"You are going to feel nervous, you are going to feel anxiety," Martinez says. "I do add that part into my class as well to get them ready for their internship and their career."

Martinez says that in deciding to go to Vista Adult School, he liked knowing that if phlebotomy didn't work out he could pursue other career training options offered there. But luckily, he found his calling in the program. He says he's very happy as both an instructor and with Scripps, and



Manuel Martinez did his phlebotomy technician training at Vista Adult School and now he is an instructor there. *Photo courtesy of Manuel Martinez*

is eager for the next semester with Vista Adult School to start.

"Even on the weekends, I don't mind going to work on Mondays," Martinez says. "I really don't."

  
To learn more about Vista Adult School, visit [www.vistaadultschool.org](http://www.vistaadultschool.org)