

# Hartford Courant

VOLUME CLXXIV NUMBER 280

COURANT.COM • MOBILE.COURANT.COM

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2010

N | Hartford Courant | OCTOBER 7, 2010

**UNITED WAY  
COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN**

## Your Gift at Work

### EDUCATION

#### *A Second Chance at School Success*

From the smile on Leslie's face when she describes her studies, you would never guess that this 18-year-old high school senior is a former dropout.

But things were very different just a couple of years ago. Regular high school simply wasn't working for Leslie. She felt disconnected from her classes – so disconnected that she quit attending.

Leslie spent a year outside of school, hanging out in her Hartford neighborhood with friends who had also dropped out. She watched as the gap began to widen between her dropout friends – some of whom were becoming pregnant – and her old school friends. And she didn't like what she saw.

"It started to feel like my friends and sister who had stayed in school were passing me by," Leslie says. "I knew I wanted something different for myself."

Leslie credits her mother, her grandmother and her Youth Development Specialist at Our Piece of the Pie®, a United Way partner, with encouraging her to consider her future carefully. With their support, she decided to re-enroll in school – this time at Opportunity High School, an innovative partnership school run by Hartford Public Schools and Our Piece of the Pie.

And this time is different: Leslie is studying hard and mapping out a plan for her future, with help from her Youth Development Specialist. Every student at Opportunity High School works with such a specialist to create a personalized plan for their education and future career. The specialists also provide much-needed support to keep students motivated and on track.



*Leslie was a high school dropout. Today, she is a high school senior and hopes to become an Intensive Care Unit nurse. An innovative new school supported by your gifts to United Way Community Investment is making it possible.*

This personalized approach gets results: As of June 2010, approximately 80 percent of Opportunity High School students who had completed an entire year at the school had earned more credits than in their previous year of high school. And out of 90 students tracked, 100 percent created a resume, more than 56 percent improved their interviewing skills, and more than 74 percent participated in extracurricular activities such as community projects, sports, and youth entrepreneurship programs.

As for Leslie, she hopes to go to college and become an Intensive Care Unit nurse. "Staying in school and graduating is the first step on my path to success," Leslie says. "I know it's going to be a lot of work – but with help from my family, my teachers, Our Piece of the Pie and United Way, I know I can make it happen. You believe in me, and so do I."

*Your contribution to United Way Community Investment supports innovative partnerships such as Opportunity High School, which is helping overage, undercredited youth succeed in school and develop the skills they need to support themselves. Please help all our young people succeed with a generous gift to Community Investment.*

**2010 UNITED WAY COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN**