

I would like to start off by introducing myself. My name is Lekishia Mcknight, I am 36 years old and a single mother of one. I was raised in what I considered the roughest part of Orlando. I always held this desire to become a hairstylist. The desire was bottled up on the inside of me. I left it there for years ignoring my passion. See where I came from you didn't carry dreams you carried hope !!!!!. My hope was in making it to see my 18th birthday. My hope was in making it home from school everyday. My hope was that we had more than coffee to fill my stomach at night. My hope was that the lights and hot water wouldn't be turned off again that week. My hope was that bullets from a drive by shooting would miss our home. My hope was that my dad would be released from prison. My hope was that my mom would be delivered from her 35 year drug addiction. My hope was that my nieces and nephews would not become a product of their environment . My hope was in surviving as a little girl. I held no hope of being successful or having a career.

Once I grew up and discovered who I was, I began to revisit that passion I had burning on the inside. I remember how I would sit on my porch doing everyone's hair in the neighborhood. I fell in love with hair at the age of 8. When I did hair I felt free. I felt creative. I felt important!

I wanted to explore this adventure, so I signed up for Cosmetology school. Soon as I signed up for school I found out I was pregnant. I was high risk and was unable to go through with the program. I promised myself I would go back and pursue my dream. I tried again a year later and then was hit with a divorce. There I was a single mom. I had to focus on putting food on the table. I had to put my dream aside to focus on my son. My dream of being a cosmetologist got buried under all of life's circumstances. I just gave up on doing hair. I looked at my son and all the struggles I had to endure going up. I had to do something to better my family to break the cycle of poverty. I grew up being told that only people who carry degrees were successful, so I went back to school hoping to earn my Master's degree. Hoping my degree would make my son proud and my family proud. I spent 4 years at Valencia College. Yes, I spent four years at a two year college , but I hated it. I was not interested. I didn't feel alive. I remember finally being 1 semester away from graduating. I woke up one day and I realized this is not what I want to do! I wanted to do hair.

I searched everywhere. I called every cosmo school in Orlando. I couldn't find not one that was flexible with my schedule as a working and single mom of a teenage boy. It seemed impossible. I prayed and prayed to find a school. I had been creating my own ways and making my own plans . One day God reminded me he is the light of my hope!! Jeremiah 29:11 says, For I know the plans I have for you declares, the Lord "plans to prosper you and not to harm you , plans to give you HOPE and a future

Hair in Motion Beauty Academy changed my life. In the middle of a pandemic when schools were closed, jobs were being lost. Mrs. Lesline took a risk and opened up a school. She took a risk for people she didn't even know. She risked her image, her brand , her business because she had faith in her students. She didn't know what was on the other side of this, but she walked by faith anyway. It made more sense to wait until the



pandemic was over, but I believe she knew the feeling we felt as individuals. The feeling of wanting to fulfil your dream, the feeling of wanting more for yourself and your children. People were losing hope in the pandemic and we were given ours!

This program has been an opportunity of a lifetime!!!! This program changed not only my life, but my family's life.

This cosmetology program has taught me how to be successful. I now have the opportunity to break generational poverty off of my blood line and others. I now have the opportunity to create jobs. My goal is to go back to my community to help provide hope to little girls that felt like me. This program gave me the opportunity to open up streams of income. I have the opportunity to choose where I want to live. I don't have to live in low incoming housing. My son will now grow up in the best neighborhood and attend the best schools. Because of this program I can be whatever I wanna be. There is no limit to my success. I can be a fashion show stylist, platform artist, editorial advertising stylist, celebrity stylist, instructor, educator, salon owner/manager, beautician, wedding and event stylist... I can now be my own boss and write my own checks!!!!!! and none of this would have been possible without Career Source!

I am so grateful to have been given this opportunity!!! I know if this program totally changed my life that it can help change someone else's.

Thank you so much again for this OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME!!!!

sincerely, Lekishia Mcknight

Class of 2021!!!!!!