

Success story: Alissa Barrow
January 2024



Alissa Barrow knows from personal experience the impact a library, in particular the Atlantic City Free Public Library, can have on a person.

Alissa joined the library staff in 2021 as a Senior Digital Navigator – but their experiences at the library date back to their early childhood.

A lifelong lover of reading, they frequently visited the library as a child with their parents to borrow books. As soon as they turned 13, Alissa began coming to the library every day – describing it as “the spot” to be.

They immediately joined the library’s volunteer Teen Advisory Group (TAG) and were excited about being allowed in the Teen Lounge. Alissa participated in many library activities, including the Summer Reading Program – where they were recognized by City Council as a top reader, Makers Day, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Read-in and National Night Out.

With encouragement from the library Youth Services staff, they began to explore their passions, such as music creation (using Ableton in the library's Makerspace) and pop culture (anime and manga).

“I think the biggest parts was the social environment,” Alissa said when describing the library’s impact on them. “When I became a teenager and started coming to the library on my own, I met all types of people I would call my friends that I still remain in contact with today.”

When Alissa was looking for a job while attending Atlantic Cape Community College, they thought of the library – knowing they would be helping the community.

They have taught basic computer classes and provided 1-on-1 computer training. Currently, they coordinate the library's BEST (Building Employment Skills Training) Program and help the public understand what a valuable resource the library is and all the essential services it has to offer.

Success story: Arthur Hopson
November 2023



Arthur Hopson was looking for a job.

So, he took a training class to improve his job skills, applied for a job online and later received a call to interview for that position - and all of that happened while at the Atlantic City Free Public Library.

After learning that Hopson hoped to find a job, staff suggested free classes he could sign up for at the library. He registered for a computer class and ServSafe Food Handling - offered through the library's BEST (Building Employment Skills Training) Program. ServSafe participants learn about food safety to protect the public from foodborne illness and can earn a certificate recognized by the restaurant industry.

Coincidentally, while at the library taking the SafeServ class to better his chances of landing a job, Ocean Casino Resort called him to set up an interview for a steward position. Hopson wound up getting

the job and says “I love it.”

That was a job that Hopson applied for at the library, with the assistance of a staff member.

After being locked out of his old email and unable to reset his password, library staff helped Hopson create a new one because he needed it for his Ocean application.

“(Staff) explained the importance of emails to me because I wasn’t understanding the ramifications of not having an email address in today’s day and age. Without reliable access to an email it’s hard to complete job applications.”

Any final words about the library?

“I would tell them to come here if they have any problems with anything,” Hopson said. “Come to the Atlantic City Library because they will help you.”

To learn more about the library’s classes and BEST Program, please stop by the Main Library Help Desk, call (609) 345-2269 or visit www.acfpl.org.

Success story: Mark Anthony Mitchell
July 2023



When Mark Anthony Mitchell comes to the Atlantic City Free Public Library, good things happen to him.

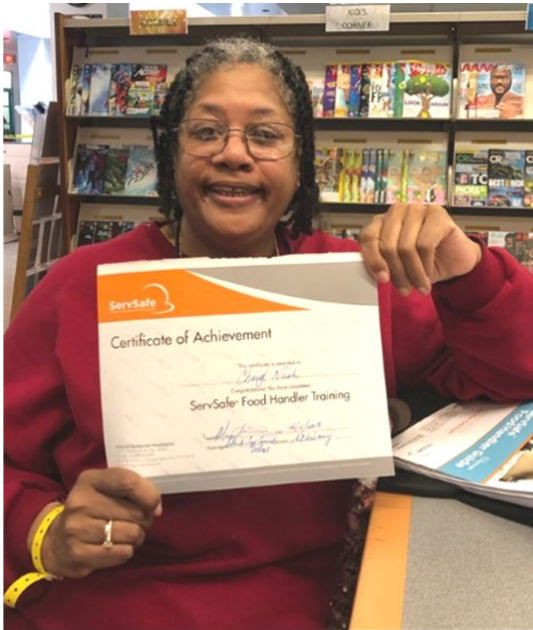
Born and raised in Atlantic City, Mitchell is a longtime library member. Early this year, library staff helped him with an online Casino Reinvestment Development Authority job application. Mitchell says roughly a week later he got a call from the CRDA, where he is now employed as a general maintenance worker.

“Every time I’ve come (to the library), I’ve gotten a job,” says Mitchell, who listed the former Revel Casino Hotel and Hard Rock Hotel & Casino as other places he has been offered jobs after receiving assistance from library staff.

Mitchell credits the library with helping him develop computer skills as a result of classes he has taken over the years, and appreciates several staff members who have assisted him with different tasks.

“The Atlantic City Library has helped with all of my needs, employment, socialization and housing,” he says.

**Success story: Cheryl Nash
May 2023**



Since suffering a stroke in March 2021, Cheryl Nash admitted that her self esteem has been low.

“I felt shut down,” she said. “Hadn’t done anything (since the stroke). Wasn’t motivated. I didn’t think I was capable of doing anything.”

Things began to improve after seeing a flyer for the Atlantic City Free Public Library’s BEST (Building Employment Skills Training) Program.

She registered for ServSafe, one of the library’s BEST classes. Participants learn about safe food handling and can earn an industry-recognized certification that is good for three years. In her most recent job, Nash was a cook for the clubs and suites at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford.

Nash, who recently moved to Atlantic City, took the ServSafe class in April 2023 at the Main Library.

“It pushed me,” she said. “I was intimidated because of my illness and age. I saw young people and wondered what I was doing here. The instructor was amazing. I felt right at home. There were no stupid questions. They wouldn’t move along until everyone understood.”

The experience left her feeling “much better” about herself.

“(I’m) more encouraged,” she said. “I’m waiting to see if there’s a managerial ServSafe class. I wouldn’t have done that before.”

Nash said she would like to start a program that provides hot meals to

the underprivileged.

What would she tell people who are considering taking a training class at the library?

“I’d encourage them to do it,” she said. “You never know what you can do until you try. Don’t let a handicap, disability or age stop you.”

For more information about BEST and other library programs, please visit our Help Desk or call (609) 345-2269.