

Myesha Simpson (Speech given at LVGH Gala)



I never enjoyed going to school. I was always told I was “dumb” by my teachers, parents, family members, and friends. I had no confidence in myself. My mother was not around a lot, and I had no one to turn to when I needed help with my homework so if I did not understand it I would just not do it. I knew I was falling behind with my reading and writing but I was too busy helping my mom raise my little brother to do anything about it. At 15, I found myself pregnant. My mother passed away 7 months into my pregnancy, and I was completely lost. I did not know what to do. I was scared, broke and a high school dropout, with nowhere to live. I found myself getting mixed up with the wrong people that led me to making a lot of the bad decisions. My decisions landed me in incarceration at 17. While I was in jail. I went to school while I was there and earned my G.E.D by guessing the answers. I was unable to read or understand any of the questions, so you could say luck was on my side. When I was released, I wanted more in life, but I was so scared to admit that I did not know how to read. I was ashamed to ask for help. I thought anyone I asked would think I was dumb. After many years of working dead-end jobs, 4 or 5 at a time, I said “enough is enough” I wanted to show my children that I could do better and prove to myself that all those people who thought I

was “dumb” were wrong. My aunt eventually looked online and found a literacy program and gave me the number. Every day she would ask “did you call?” After 2 weeks straight of asking me, I finally called and made an appointment at LVGH. From the first day I walked in to LVGH it was a new life for me and a second chance at learning. The day I walked in to LVGH I met Miriam. She was so warm and welcoming. Then she brought me to Ms. Rose. Ms. Rose made me feel like I could achieve anything, as long as I had the drive to do it. She was that motivation I was looking for my whole life. I left that meeting, crying. I had felt like a weight that I had been carrying since I was 15 had been lifted of me. I was excited to start classes. I had classes Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. I loved my classes and I felt good knowing I was learning new things. I was introduced to Leo when I told Rose I wanted to find a better job. I started meeting with Leo weekly to build my resume and search for jobs. One day Leo came up to me and asked me if I wanted to be part of the new ServeSafe Food Training Program and I said “Yes.” On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I went to the training program at the church in East Hartford to learn, read, and cook. We met an amazing woman named Mrs. Sherry and a man named Pastor Gary. I felt so welcomed whenever I was there. After I finished the training, Leo asked me if I was ready to take the certification test. He told me that if I passed the test, it would help me get a job in food service. With hard work studying and good luck, I passed it. When I found out I passed the test I felt my heart radiate strength and I started to believe in myself again. After I finished the training and passed the test I still would go to the church and help out in the kitchen because I loved it so much. All the people were like family to me, and I loved going there to help out. One day at the church Mrs. Sherry introduced me to her

boss. Mrs. Sherry described me as her 'little firecracker'. She told her boss that I was leader and one of the stars of the program. She encouraged me to apply for a job with Sodexo. At first, I was nervous because of my history but Mrs. Sherry encouraged me to apply and said she had a good feeling about it. Mrs. Sherry and her boss gave me an opportunity that no one ever did before. I now work at Anna Morris School in East Hartford. I love it there and a year later my story is still growing.

I want to give Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford a huge thanks, as you are my new family. I felt cared for the first day there and people like that are hard to come by. Thank you to everyone who is here tonight listening to my story. You are the reason so many adults are able to go back to school and achieve their dreams. LVGH changes lives. If I had never made that phone call, I don't know where I would be today. I thank God every day that I found LVGH and am so happy I can call this place home.