



Sonya worked in a factory for almost all of her adult life. After her fiancé was tragically killed in a car accident, Sonya knew she needed new skills and a new career to be able to provide for herself and her son. She came to UpRise Nashville and graduated as the Valedictorian of her class with a certification as a Clinical Medical Assistant (“CMA”). Mere months later, Sonya found herself on the frontlines helping to battle COVID-19 in the hot-spot of Antioch. Sonya is an essential employee who performed essential work when our community needed it most. Two weeks ago, Sonya took the next step in her career, landing a job as the lead CMA at Meharry’s Sickle Cell Clinic. Her new work is focused on helping infants impacted by the disease, a disease that is particularly important to Sonya as her own family has been affected by Sickle Cell Anemia. “This is meaningful work,” shares Sonya. “I get to help people, and that is one of the most important things to me.”

Sonya is not alone in her desire to gain new career skills. With the lowest minimum wage in the nation and one of the highest cost of living increases, even Nashvillians working full-time cannot provide meaningfully for their families.



At UpRise, Middle Tennesseans impacted by poverty receive education, training and a supportive community that leads to quality work with upward mobility.

When people come to UpRise, participants often face accompanying employment challenges related to recovery, domestic violence, episodic homelessness, and incarceration. Adult students called Leaders not only lead their own change, but rebuild hope, self-esteem, and opportunity for themselves and their families.

The seven-month program starts with a six-week Training Camp, an essential first step in equipping Leaders with core workplace competencies such as time management, communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, professionalism, and digital literacy. Leaders then attend institutions throughout the city to obtain certifications in 10 areas highly sought-after by local employers, such as Commercial Driver’s License, Office Administration, Medical Billing, and Coding and Clinical Medical Assistant. Bi-weekly career coaching mitigates roadblocks and helps Leaders create an individualized plan for success. When Leaders graduate with a certification debt-free, UpRise helps place them in quality career opportunities.

Leaders earn an average of \$22,758.81 more in their first year of work and experience a dramatic drop in the need for government assistance including 87.5% decrease in reliance on SNAP (food stamps) and a 51% decrease in housing benefits. Graduates join teams of respected companies such as Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Google, Stansell Electric, and Pathgroup.

Vaco’s own Kyle Allen is not only an UpRise Advisory Board Member but is known as the “Interview Guru” at UpRise. He is known for his wisdom in conquering the nerve-racking interview portion of landing a job as he teaches his popular Training Camp class. For those who want to take part, volunteer opportunities are available virtually to help Leaders with resumes, mock interviews, and elevator speeches.

UpRise desires to create a community of opportunity that causes a ripple effect in Nashville and beyond. UpRise aims to not only help someone impacted by poverty and unemployment, but their families, our community, and our local workforce. 🙌



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