



## IMPACT PROFILE: DEMARIS MCCALL



### IT IS NEVER TOO LATE FOR LEARNING

Demaris McCall, a third semester, Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Technology (HVAC-R) student at Galveston College, comes from a family of entrepreneurs. His grandfather, Shern McCall, opened and operated a concrete business, which specialized in pouring slabs and driveways for new construction. Demaris began working at his grandfather's business at the age of 13 and worked in the concrete industry over the next ten years. During 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Demaris dropped out of high school and assumed a full time position with his grandfather's company.

At the age of 20, Demaris became a father and his financial responsibilities dramatically increased. To make ends meet, he worked at his grandfather's business during the day and then worked in lawn care until 8:00 at night. At 23, Demaris knew he needed a change, so he enrolled in the Workforce Solutions' "Labor Ready" program. During the three years in that program, he earned his Transportation Worker's Identification Credential (TWIC). Demaris still found it difficult to find work that provided a living wage for his family even with this credential, so he took other jobs where he acquired skills in plumbing, sheetrock and basic electricity. While he always found jobs, he never made enough to meet the growing financial needs of himself and his family.

In May of 2016, Demaris had a conversation with brother, Malcolm Norris, who had just completed a

semester in a new program at Galveston College, called "Accelerate Texas." Malcolm explained the program was designed for adults who had not completed high school and provided an opportunity for them to prepare for the High School Equivalency Exam while also earning a workforce certificate in a career trade. Mr. Norris referred Demaris to Galveston College Career Navigator, Sharon Pagan, to learn more about Accelerate Texas. When Demaris learned Accelerate Texas included GED<sup>®</sup> Preparation and HVAC Training, he eagerly signed up to begin the program in August, 2016. Demaris explained, "I could not pass up the opportunity to prepare for the GED<sup>®</sup> test while learning a technical skill."

When questioned about his experience of taking a GED<sup>®</sup> Preparation Class and HVAC classes simultaneously, Demaris said the Accelerate Texas' GED<sup>®</sup> class helped him better prepare for HVAC classroom assignments. For example, the GED<sup>®</sup> Algebra review helped immensely when he later had to estimate HVAC heat-load calculations. Galveston College Career Navigator, Sharon Pagan, explained Accelerate TEXAS programs truly accelerate students, helping them begin their future careers quickly while motivating and supporting them through integrating basic skills training with technical training along a guided pathway. The Accelerate TX program is funded by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board through legislative appropriations.

At the end of Demaris' first semester in HVAC, he passed all three areas of the EPA Exam and earned the EPA Universal Certification. The Universal Certification permits Mr. McCall to work on small and large appliances, residential and commercial HVAC units as well as HVAC heating and cooling towers. With this industry-recognized certification, Mr. McCall also earned 16 semester credit hours and his first level 1 certificate in basic HVAC from Galveston College.

At the end of his second semester in the Accelerate TX program, Demaris earned the Texas Education Agency, Certificate of High School Equivalency on March 11, 2017 and participated in the May 2017 graduation ceremony at Galveston College's adult education partner, College of the Mainland. In front of family and friends, he proudly wore a cap and gown, walked across the stage, and was recognized for earning his Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency.

Demaris is well on his way to a life-long career. His next step? After completing his third and final semester of HVAC classes during summer 2017, he will take the remaining general academic classes required to earn his HVAC-R, Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree. He looks forward to earning his AAS and entering the HVAC workforce in January, 2018.

Galveston College's HVAC Program Director, Ronald Foster, was asked about the hourly wage a graduate, with an Associate's Degree in HVAC-R, typically earns and he said that beginning technicians are typically offered \$15 to \$18 per hour.

Mr. McCall said his children are proud of his progression through college and he plans to encourage them to earn a college credential and follow in his footsteps. Mr. McCall is living proof that it is never too late for learning!



Accelerate TX is an integrated career pathway instructional and student support model that combines contextualized basic skill support with an entry level career technical education program on a guided career pathway. A guided career pathway consists of a coherent sequence of courses and certificates designed to prepare students in a career field. Career pathways, with stackable credentials, maximize a student's opportunity to exit for employment with options to continue to higher levels of education and training without having to repeat coursework along the way.

Accelerate TX addresses a critical workforce issue: At least 60 percent of Texas jobs will require a career certificate or college degree by 2020, per the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. And 44 percent of Texans over age 25 have never been to college, let alone earned a credential. Most Accelerate TX students are pursuing credentials in health care, manufacturing, construction, and transportation. The Texas Higher Education Coordination Board funds and coordinates Accelerate Texas with support from the Texas legislature.