MVLA Adult School
Student of the Month
Djahida Benmerdji

Took online classes during COVID

Graduated as CNA, May 2021

"If I hadn't come to the adult school, says Djahida Benmerdji, "I'd be lost."

As a native of Algeria, Djahida spoke Arabic and French but little English when she arrived in the U.S. in 2017. After months of trying to learn on her own, she enrolled in the MVLA Adult School ESL program, where she found a friendly supportive community that helped her quickly improve her language skills. At the school's annual career fair, she landed her first job—seasonal employment at Nordstrom's. Building on this work experience and her improved English skills, she was able later to get a job at Citibank. As a mother of young children, she strived to balance work and family, with the added twist of life in a new country.

Met new friends in ESL class

Djahida recalls that while studying English, she met with the school's transition adviser who helped her consider career options, something that would later help her set new goals.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, Djahida again turned to the adult school. First, she joined a class to prepare for her U.S. citizenship interview. Then she enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant program. During this challenging period, the school continued to provide high-quality online classes and Djahida made the most of them, ultimately graduating as a CNA *and* passing her Citizenship test!

Became a U.S. Citizen in July 2021

Even before she graduated, she was hired as a caregiver at Villa Sienna Senior Living Community, where she worked for almost a year. She's currently looking for a new position and feels confident the skills she learned through the adult school will continue to help her on her journey. But she's not done learning. She's even thinking about taking yet another class to help improve her computer skills!

"The adult school is like open arms when you are helpless and don't know what to do," Djahida says. "You cannot find this in any other place!"