

Christian Women's Job Corps (CWJC), a ministry of WMU, is a strengths-based ministry that provides job skills and life skills to men and women living in poverty. Each participant has a Christian mentor to journey with him or her as they transition to self-sufficiency in Christ. There are currently 14 sites in NC, others in southern Africa, and more in development stages.

*Doing Justice* is in the DNA of CWJC. At its very core is a Biblical understanding of poverty as the result of broken relationships—relationships with self, others, resources, and God. We are able to approach others with a desire to see God's handiwork in them. Our participants marvel that instead of questions about what they cannot do or don't have, we ask about their strengths and how they'd like to change their life.

There are countless stories to tell you about our participants. Here are a few I'd like to share with you:

**Goals within reach:** In May, Akevia Wilson, a participant at the Roanoke-Chowan CWJC in Ahoskie, was recognized by National CWJC with the Sybil Bentley Dove Award. This grant is given to one participant/recent graduate who best exemplifies the purpose and transformation of CWJC.

Akevia shared in her testimony that she knew that she was supposed to be a teacher from a very young age. After graduating from high school, she entered college and worked two jobs, but by 19 she was a college dropout. She worked in multiple dead-end jobs for the next few years until she experienced a traumatic death in her life. She was homeless, pregnant, and hopeless when she came across Britton Ministries, a Family Care Unit of NC Baptist Children's Homes.

Akevia then discovered Roanoke-Chowan CWJC and realized that her goal of teaching was not impossible. Her son was born and she returned to community college. She began to search for a college or university to complete her Bachelor's degree. After visiting a couple of state universities in the area, she visited

Chowan University. When she saw the campus and met staff and students, Akevia told her mentor that she couldn't even hope to attend Chowan. Her mentor reminded her that CWJC was in the "hope business" and pledged to walk through the process if Akevia wanted to go to Chowan. With financial assistance (both need and academic) and Akevia's dedication to work

during semesters and over breaks, Akevia graduated from Chowan University in May with a manageable amount of debt.

Akevia said, "I am now eight days away from reaching my goal and becoming who and what I was destined to be—a teacher. God has used my journey to strengthen my faith. Because of this organization and the Christian people who have loved and encouraged me, my son and I will have

a better life. He will not have to worry about where his next meal will come from or if the light bill was paid on time. Generational poverty ends with me, because of you!"

**Pass it on:** The original graduating class of LifeWorks with CWJC in Waynesville included four women. Each of those women has completed the training to become a site coordinator. The three who still live in the Waynesville area are working at the site to provide opportunities for other women to discover their potential. The fourth graduate currently lives in South Carolina and is working to begin a site in her new community.

**A lighter load:** Pivot CWJC in Forsyth County began classes in February. On the first day, Site Coordinator Carol Polk asked the women to close their eyes and see the burdens that they were carrying as a backpack. She asked the students to walk outside the door and put their virtual backpacks down so that they could concentrate on what God had for them. In a class in April, one participant said, "You remember that backpack you told us about on the first day? Mine's not as heavy because I have all of you. God didn't want me carrying all that stuff."

As State Coordinator for CWJC of NC, I am privileged to hear these stories of God's work. I strive to provide resources to enable communities to transform from a hand-out to a hand-up ministry to reach those in poverty. For more information, visit [www.cnjenc.org](http://www.cnjenc.org) or e-mail me at [cnjenc@gmail.com](mailto:cnjenc@gmail.com).

## in the hope business

by Cara Lynn Vogel, Coordinator, Women's/Men's Job Corps of NC



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Akevia Wilson