Each month the Buncombe County Health and Human Services Department asks someone to share their experience of working with a mentor and mentoring others or acting as a sponsor and advocate. It is hoped that readers will increase their efforts to find a mentor as well as be mentors to others.

This month's featured employee is Donnell Sloan, an Income Maintenance Caseworker II for Buncombe County Health and Human Services.

Donnell Sloan

Be yourself and follow your moral compass.

What do you love about your job?

I love that I’m able to impact peoples’ lives. That is especially meaningful to me because I once was someone who needed a little help, and my experience gives me the opportunity to help my co-workers better understand what it is like for the people we serve. Helping people change their situation is really rewarding for me.

When someone comes to us in time of need and asks for assistance, and I’m able to walk them through programs that we offer and explain that we are trying to help them get to a better place in their lives, that is fulfilling to me—to see them come in agitated, angry, or scared, and leave at ease because they know that we are helping them.

I take my job seriously. I try to make sure I give clients my full attention and that they understand all that they are eligible for once they leave.

What do you see as success for your career down the road?

At this moment, I don’t know. I do know that to further my career I am going back to school to get a master’s degree. I have three possible graduate programs that I am currently exploring: Public Administration, Business Administration, or Health Administration. Whichever one I choose, I know that further education will help propel me on a career path that I select.

I have also learned, as I’ve gotten older, that networking will help me maneuver whatever landscape I choose. I may not know where my career path is headed at this moment, but I’m looking forward to what the future may hold.

Would you describe a situation that helped you get started in your career?

Having come from a difficult background, making the right decision at the right time, which was entering the military, has propelled me to where I am now. What I think is missed a lot of times is actually standing back and looking from the point where someone started to the point where they are now.

Success is often measured by what you’ve done in school or how long you’ve worked in a job, but that doesn’t take into account what it took for a person to get to that point. Making the decision to go into the military really was the one decision that changed my life. Joining the military removed me from an environment that other people don’t typically make it out of. That was the main decision that helped me get my career started.

Who currently is or has been a mentor to you?

As far as my education goes, my mentors are Dr. Dwight Mullen and Dr. Dolly Jenkins-Mullen. They are both political science professors at UNCA and are the people responsible for my sound education. They taught me a lot and they continue to push me to do more, especially in the community, and with my education. They taught me how to read and analyze different situations from many different perspectives so that I don’t react emotionally. Professionally, Frank Castellblanco is a mentor and a friend of mine. He helps me understand how to maneuver different situations within my organization. He shows me what to do to move up the ladder and how to stand out from the rest.

Would you ever consider becoming a mentor?

Right now, I’m not a mentor within my organization, but I am first and foremost a mentor to my son. I am involved in the community with various coaching positions, such as baseball and basketball, and I also sit on the public policy committee for Children First/Community in Schools, and I completed my internship with them. I have worked with troubled youth at a residential group home helping children with mental and behavioral health issues.

My son is only three years old right now, but when the time comes, I want to let him know to first and foremost, “Be yourself and follow your moral compass. Choose a path that aligns with who you are and what you believe and if you cannot find one then create one.” People always say, “The sky is the limit,” but how can the sky be the limit when there are footprints on the moon? The only thing standing in your way is the limits you place upon yourself.

Find a Mentor – Be a Mentor to Others

Do You Want to Make a Difference?

If work is more than just a paycheck, consider a career with Buncombe County Health & Human Services

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