

DAWSON

unplugged



Twenty-six-year-old Natalie Dawson had her first job — throwing newspapers from her bicycle in a Lancaster neighborhood — when she was 12 years old. She's been working ever since. Almost.

In 2009, Dawson enjoyed a newfound career as a medical assistant but, after two years on the job, was laid off due to organizational changes in her office.

"I was devastated," explains the single mother. "I had two little kids at home and a career as a pharmacy tech for the landmark Williams Apothecary in downtown Lancaster. "Natalie came highly recommended to our staff and has been a wonderful addition to our team,"

remarks Mr. Williams, pharmacy owner for more than 42 years.

What does the future hold for Ms. Dawson? She plans to continue with Williams Apothecary while earning a bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis on long-term care management. Her dream is to help people — like herself — who have taken the "long road," as she calls it.

"The counselors spent a lot of time talking with me and helping me figure out what was going to be the best career fit based on my situation, personality and schedule," states Dawson.

She enrolled in the 12-month pharmacy tech program in March of 2011 and found work as a nurse's assistant shortly thereafter, allowing her to provide the necessities for herself and her children. She had no money for the "extra" things, she says, like new clothes, eating out or socializing with friends. Everything she earned went toward gas and maintaining

her worn-out car, allowing her to make the trek every day from home to school and back again.

"I worked from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., then drove 45 minutes to get home and was up by 5 a.m. the next day to get everyone out the door," remembers Dawson. "My friends were telling me to just quit, that it wasn't worth it. They didn't understand the kind of life I want to give my kids."

"The life our parents give us is their choice," says

Natalie Dawson. "What

we make of ourselves

is up to us. If you want

something good, go get

it. Realize that you're

going to have to struggle,

but it's worth it. That's

the way I live my life."

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