

## Dudley volunteer getting life on the right track

Written by Deb Egenberger

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### **ResCare program provides motivation, financial assistance.**

The struggle to raise two small children on her own had Melissa McPeak wondering where her life was headed.

When she graduated from Eustis-Farnam High School in 2006, McPeak started college but the birth of her daughter derailed that plan.

“And I found online classes weren’t for me,” said the young woman who now lives in Gothenburg.

Five years, another child and a divorce later, McPeak found herself searching for direction.

A program called Nebraska ResCare Workforce Services is helping McPeak find the right path.

“It’s not easy,” she said. “None of it is easy but I finally feel like things are falling together.”

McPeak learned about ResCare through her caseworker at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and was accepted into the program in January.

ResCare provides financial assistance for travel expenses, child care and other costs associated with a single parent pursuing higher education for better employment.

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In return, McPeak is required to spend a combined 84 hours a month taking college classes and volunteering in an approved position.

She spends Tuesdays and Thursdays in class at North Platte Community College.

Government grants help pay for her tuition and she hopes to eventually fill in the gaps with scholarships.

She's working toward an associate degree in business technology with an emphasis in medical records but she might change her mind.

"I've always wanted to have a job where I would be helping people," McPeak said. "Now I'm considering being a teacher or a para educator."

Education isn't something McPeak ever thought about pursuing until she got hooked up with a volunteer spot at Dudley.

Principal Teresa Messersmith knew McPeak from her years of teaching at Eustis-Farnam.

When Messersmith learned McPeak needed a volunteer position to fulfill her ResCare requirements, she had the perfect spot.

Most of Dudley's volunteers are parents or grandparents who spend 20 to 30 minutes a day or two a week helping in classrooms.

This is Messersmith's first experience with a program such as ResCare.

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After an application process, background check and interview, McPeak became a Dudley volunteer.

“It was just like going through the whole hiring process for a job,” she said.

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