Reaching For The Brass Ring

Kristy Bellamy Makes A New Start With Help From JTPA

BY SUSAN USHER

Who says you don't get a second chance?

Kristy Julene Bellamy knows better; she believes in miracles.

She also knows that the opportunity for a new start doesn't guarantee success. That it takes having a dream, strong determination and a little help along the way from others who believe in you even when you're having doubts.

The Supply woman recently received the 1994 Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Participant of the Year Award for the Individual Referral Program in Brunswick County.

Hers is the kind of success story that could inspire others to try to change their lives for the better, to not give up, to stretch and reach again for that brass ring like a child on an old-fashioned merry-go-round.

Grab the shining ring dangling just out of reach above your head, youngsters were told, and if you truly believe, your wish will come true.

At age 18, Kristy moved away from home, she said, "expecting to live like a grown person and handle all of the responsibilities that had been placed before me."

She learned very quickly that the real world has a harsh, unforgiving edge. After 1½ years living on her own trying to work odd jobs, she simply gave up. Disheartened and exhausted, Kristy retreated to safe harbor.

"I could no longer handle the real world," she recalled. "I asked my grandparents if I could stay with them. They opened their door and their hearts to me. Time went by. Many days I would get up depressed, crying all the time, asking God, 'Why me?'"

In fall 1992, she was skimming the The Brunswick Beacon when she spotted an article concerning new courses Brunswick Community College planned to offer that winter as part of a regional health education consortium. Those courses included phlebotomy, the medical practice of opening a vein to draw blood. The short-term course would prepare students with a valuable skill said to be in demand across southeastern North Carolina.

Space was limited to 10 students, on a first-come, first-served basis. Interest in the course was high and rumors were circulating that "a lot" of would-be enrollees planned to camp out the night before.

Kristy was determined to get into that class. She grabbed the brass ring, held it close to her heart, and set out to make her wish come true.

The night of Dec. 1, she pulled her old car into the parking lot at BCC at around 10:30 p.m., curled up and slept as best she could. Rolling out at 7 a.m. Kristy took her place near the front of the registration line. She made the cut-off. Two quarters later, Kristy had completed the program.

"You don't see that kind of determination very often, especially in someone so young," says Linda Moorefield, Job Training Partnership Act coordinator for BCC. "I'm really proud of her. She has really done well."

At BCC Kristy qualified for assistance under the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) individual referral program.

JTPA sponsors employment and training programs aimed at helping get disadvantaged individuals off income subsidies and into the workforce—where Kristy desperately wanted to be. Under the individual referral program she qualified for a full scholarship to train in an occupational field where skill shortages exist and employment opportunities are available. The scholarship could be used to pay for books, tuition, supplies, fees, uniforms, tools, licenses and professional exams.

Along the way, Kristy's vision grew. She had worked before as a nursing assistant, but needed to brush up on her skills to meet new state registration requirements. After completing the phlebotomy course, she enrolled in the Nursing Assistant III refresher course, again with JTPA support, and earned a place on the state register. She completed the class just 16 days before BCC's Aug. 20 commencement.

Still ahead of her was sitting for a national phlebotomist certification exam in Raleigh. Without an acceptable score, finding employment as a phlebotomist would be difficult. On Sept. 20, she passed the American Society of Clinical Pathologists exam" with flying colors."

With her dual health care skills Kristy confidently began job hunting, but grew more and more discouraged.

"The fall of 1993 was one of phone calls, resumes, applications and nail-biting," she recalled. "Sadness overwhelmed me."

Then, on Nov. 18, she received a call from Janet Shew, coordinator of the Brunswick County Health Department's WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program. WIC provides education and nutritional support for expectant women, and infants and young children. Kristy heard the magic words: "I'd like you to come in for an interview."

But WIC was hoping to hire someone with more experience.

The waiting and hunting resumed. By then Kristy had almost convinced herself that she would never find a job.

In mid-December Mrs. Shew called again, asking if Kristy were still interested in the opening.

"I said 'Yes!,'" she recalled.

Kristy calls that first day on the job—Dec. 20—"Glory Day."

"My Lord, my family, my JTPA family saved me from what ddn't have to happen," she says.

For just under four months she worked part-time as a community health assistant, becoming a full-time permanent employee April 4, qualifying for benefits that include health insurance.

"JTPA made me a true believer that miracles can happen in the lives of many whom are often willing to go that extra mile but are often unable to," she says. "I'm so very proud of myself and my accomplishments. JTPA made the road smoother and the ride more comfortable."

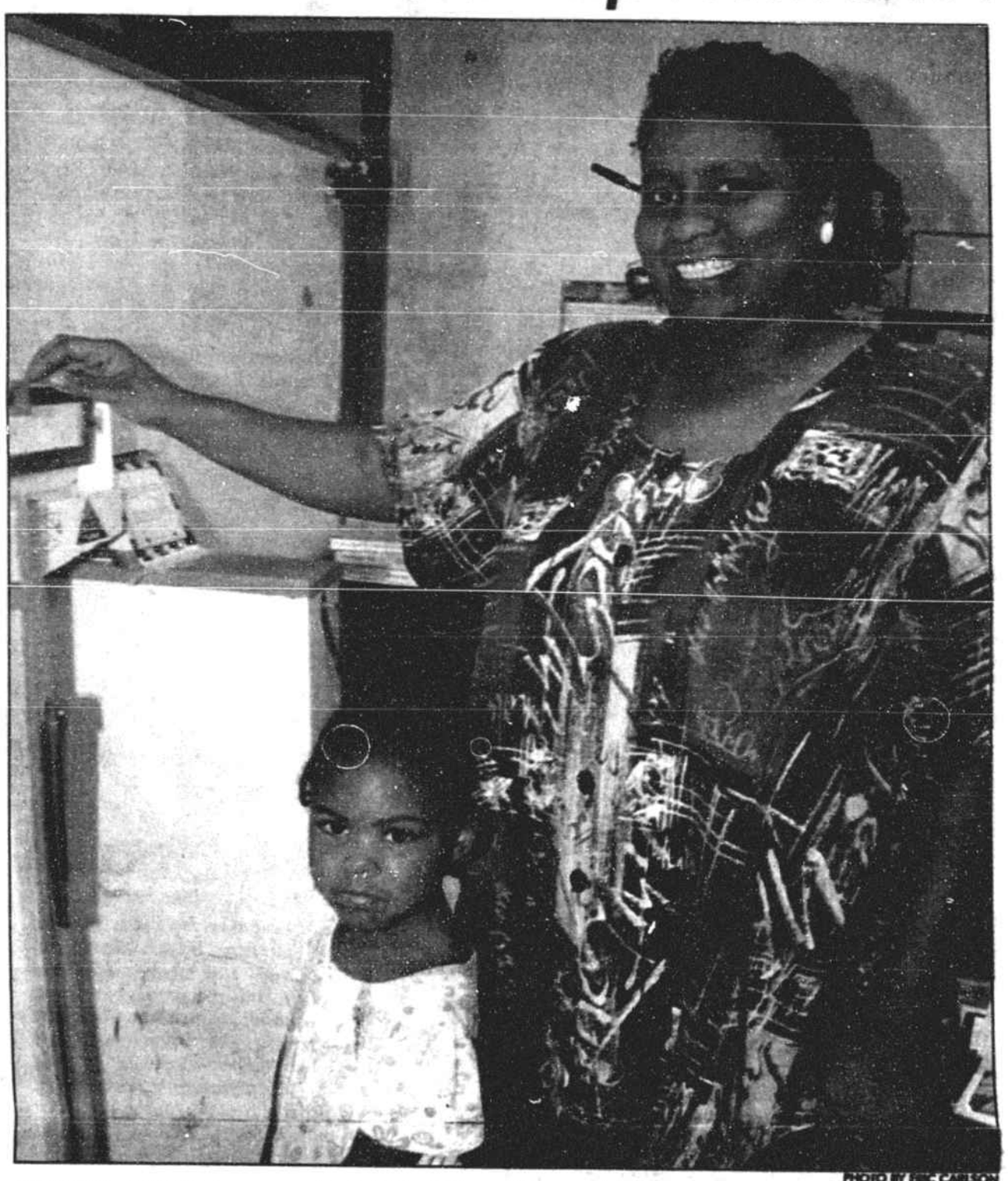


PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

KRISTY BELLAMY measures the height of Shonte Hooper, 4, as part of Bellamy's job as community health assistant in the Brunswick County Health Department's WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program. Shonte is the daughter of Sylvia Hooper Brown of Leland.

Long-Term Coastal Resource Study Begins With UNCW Data

Despite volumes of scientific research, no one really knows for sure if conditions along the eastern coastline are declining or improving.

"There was no systematic look at the United States in terms of environmental health," said Courtney Hackney, a marine biologist at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

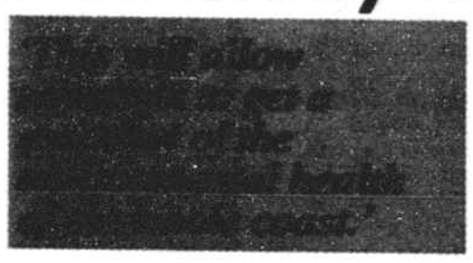
But this summer, UNCW, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) began laying the groundwork for long-term monitoring of estuaries along the North Carolina coast.

Estuaries lie between the fresh water of inland rivers and the salt water of the open ocean. They have unique characteristics that make them the most productive coastal ecological resources. Health estuaries contain a variety of plants and animals all interacting in close balance with the surrounding physical and chemical environment. The ecological balance is important in enabling the system to resist or recover from changes brought on by natural causes or man-induced stress.

While billions of dollars are spent each year to reduce pollution to surface waters that affect estuaries and other coastal habitats, there is little information available to judge the nation's success in protecting the overall health of these valuable resources.

EMAP is the first comprehensive program to collect and analyze data that will provide the basis for the monitoring of the nation's coastal resources. It is a cooperative effort between two federal agencies borne out of the National Coastal Monitoring Act (Title V of the 1992 Amendments to the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act). It merges NOAA's National Status and Trends Program and EPA's Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) to prevent the duplication of effort and to build a larger and more reliable data base.

UNCW was awarded a $490,000 contract to carry out EMAP research this year in the North Carolina estuarine system, which encompasses coastal waters from the Virginia border to the South Carolina line. This includes more than half the 18,000-square-kilometer Carolinian Province currently being studies, said Hackney, who is coordinating the project with James Merritt, director



of UNCW's Center for Marine Science Research; Martin Posey, marine biologist; and Steve Ross, N.C. sanctuary program coordinator.

By the time the five-year project is completed, it will be an approximate $2.3 million effort in North Carolina.

A dozen researchers, including three full-time scientists from UNCW's Center for Marine Science Research and nine UNCW students or graduates, are collecting data at 50 sites through Aug. 25. Hackney explained that the sizes were randomly selected and include a variety of locations ranging from large sounds to small tidal creeks, some of which have never been studied.

"We're sampling a whole range of estuarine conditions," he said.

This is the first of four years of data collection. The fifth year of the project will be dedicated to analyzing the data, he said.

Data will be collected June through September of each year by field crews with the assistance of programmable instruments armed with probes that can take samples at selected time intervals around the clock. Sampling will include all types of animal life, from fish populations to minute creatures which live in the mud, oxygen content and sediment toxicity.

"It's a very detailed sampling procedure," Hackney said. Because of that, UNCW researchers had to undergo a week of training to become certified by the federal government.

"We had to prove we know the protocols. It ensures the samples are good and can be used in the future," he said. Stringent controls were established so data collections would be uniform up and down the coast, no matter who was performing them, and provide an accurate picture of changes in coastal conditions for years to come.

"The main thrust is to get a data base that anyone can use," Hackney said. "This is a huge project. It's very complex."

Similar EMAP monitoring has already been completed in the Northeast's Virginia Province and the Louisianan Province along the Gulf of Mexico.

Data collected will be made available to the U.S. Congress and state agencies such as divisions of coastal management, fisheries and environmental management for future coastal policy development, Hackney said.

The work won't end when the EMAP study of the entire Carolinian Province (which ranges from Cape Henry, Va., to the Indian River lagoon system in Florida) is completed. Hackney said the whole process will begin again in ten years.

"This is a long-term effort," he said.

Hackney said he believes EMAP will reveal some surprises when all the data are compiled and analyzed.

"A lot of areas people think poor habitats may be normal, but it may reveal dangers we're not aware of," he said. In addition, "we fully expect to turn up rare and new species."

"This will allow us as scientists to get a look at North Carolina never before seen, a snapshot view of the environmental health of the whole coast."

The Gooseneck Barnacles

BY BILL FAVER

Some marine species are active in that they roam in seas, bays and marshes in search of food. Others are passive and stay in one place waiting for food to come by them.

FAVER

The gooseneck barnacles are a combination of active and passive, for they attach themselves to ships and pieces of lumber and debris and then are carried many miles by currents or trade routes.

Goose barnacles, or gooseneck barnacles, have little resemblance to the more common acorn barnacles we find on pilings and rocks and other places around the shore. Most goose barnacles live on the deep sea bottom, but some wash up on our beaches attached to ocean debris.

These "stalked barnacles" have an elongated body within a shell made of two halves, each with several plates. The body forms a stalk an inch or more long and fastens by means of a glue-like substance.

Barnacles characteristically stand on their heads and stick their feet out to bring in the food. Six pairs of legs divide into curling jointed branches at the end and resemble feathery plumes.

Since the goose barnacle attaches itself and gets a free ride all over the world, it is not considered to inhabit any particular place but it always a visitor wherever it washes ashore. Those we find have stalks about an inch long, but in some parts of the world the stalk may be up to a foot long.

One story in medieval England is that the barnacle goose hatched from these goose barnacles. Since the migratory habits of these geese were unknown, it was assumed they developed almost overnight from the barnacles found in the area.

Even as late as 1678, Sir Robert Moray dissected a goose barnacle and reported to the British Royal Society that, "The little bill like that of a goose, the eyes marked, the head, neck, breast, wings and tail formed, the feathers everywhere perfectly shaped and blackish in color, and the feet like that of other waterfowl."

Such imagination gave these barnacles their name, and many years passed before the notion was dispelled that these shells broke open and geese flew away.

Watch for pieces of driftwood and floating timber riding the waves as they wash ashore. Examine them carefully for gooseneck barnacles stretching out their slender stalks to feed. And if you find them, you might just look around for some geese overhead.

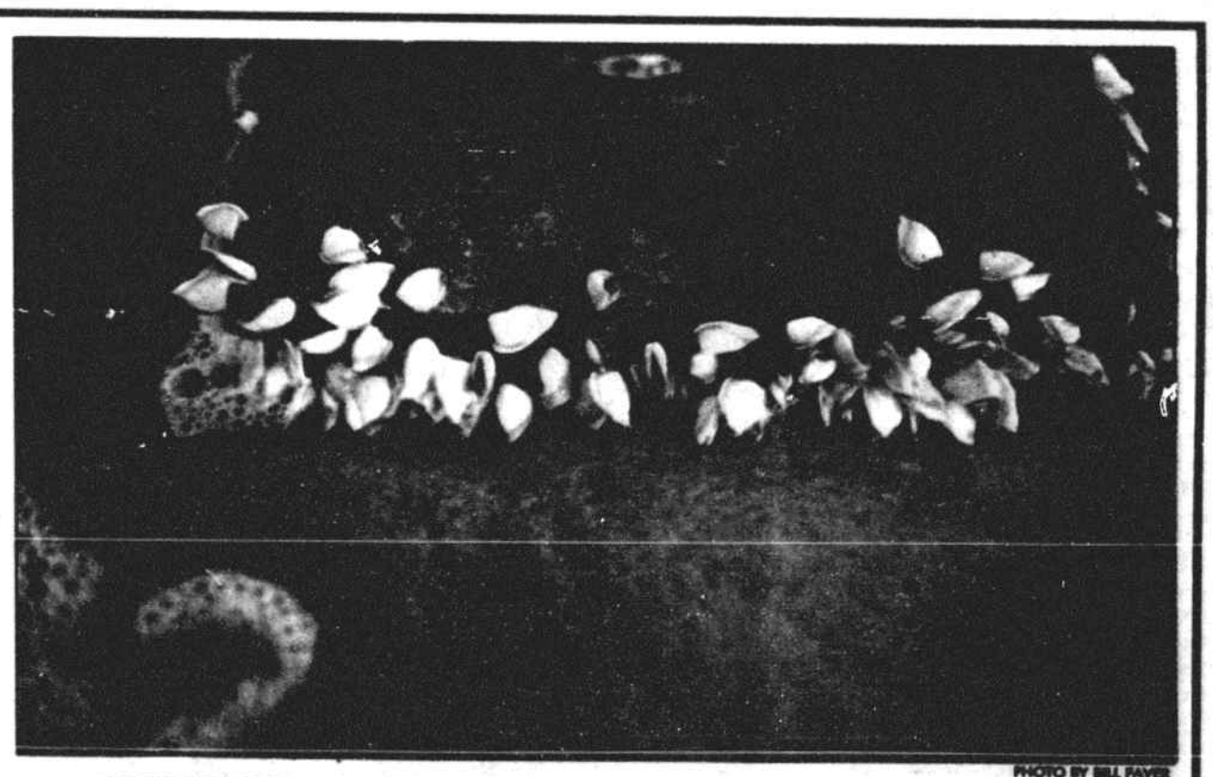


PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

GOOSENECK BARNACLES are sometimes found on boards washed up on the beach.