

# UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF GREATER CHICAGO...NEIGHBORHOOD BY NEIGHBORHOOD

LIVE UNITED®

## Dwayne's Story



Making a commitment to improving your finances or establishing a career takes perseverance and determination. It's not a quick fix, nor is it easy without the support of others. On New Year's Eve, 2016, Dwayne made a resolution to do both.

Raised in the Jane Addams projects, Dwayne was surrounded by temptation. Despite being a mechanic by age 16, he ended up in the wrong crowd. After serving time for a felony conviction, he couldn't find employment. The felony label was more powerful than his years as a mechanic. After being unemployed for seven years, relying on side jobs for income just wasn't enough for this father of eight. In 2015, Dwayne declared bankruptcy. It was a pivotal moment that inspired him to make a change for his family.

As part of his New Year's resolution, Dwayne visited the **North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN)**, a United Way of Metro Chicago partner agency. First, he completed the U-Turn Permitted program, which provided job readiness training, including lessons on how to approach his felony conviction with employers. Two weeks after his graduation, Dwayne's coach referred him to a transitional job. While working, he completed Moving Forward, NLEN's Diesel Mechanic Training Program, concurrently with NLEN's Bridge Literacy program. As he neared the end of his transitional job, he was hired as a Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Apprentice through the CTA's Second Chance program.

Recently, Dwayne accepted a promotion at the CTA to become a rail car repair man. He's now a part of the union and sees a path to management in the future. Dwayne credits his family and the teachers at NLEN for supporting him and his journey. Despite graduating, he still sees NLEN as a refuge, and frequents to meet with his financial coach, use the computer lab and keep up with his teachers. Eventually, he hopes to own his own home and his financial coach has helped him raise his credit score over 200 points to put him on track to do so. But for now, Dwayne looks forward to the stability of his new job.



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