



Greetings, SMCC History Buffs....lately we've been heavily promoting SMCC scholarship opportunities funded by the Dorrance Foundation, specifically designed to help single parents return to school. (This is a great program, by the way--- [you can get more info here.](#)) But South Mountain forging community connections to help deserving students--- especially those with families of their own---is nothing new. Check out this *Arizona Republic* article from August 1989 for more inspiring stories of SMCC helping our community members achieve their dreams....



Priscilla Ellis, with her sons, Kevin Johnson, 14, and Christopher Ellis, 3, says a program at South Mountain Community College taught her parenting skills.

The Arizona Republic

## S. Mountain college project offers minority moms brighter horizons

By Julia Lobaco  
The Arizona Republic

At the end of the quiet street was South Mountain, framed by storm clouds and a stop sign.

Here was the house where old carpeting lay clumped across the sparse lawn, a haven for last night's storm mud.

"Come on in," said a small voice hidden just beyond the broken screen door.

The faded blue walls of the tiny house belied the vibrant life inside.

Nine people, including LaVerne Perryman, filled the small, dark living room.

Perryman, 19, a single mother of four, is determined to find a new horizon.

Her 4-month-old son, Khiry Hakeem Bennett, already found his, she said.

"Now, I've got to have strength," she said. "I have to get an education to help the rest of my little ones."

Khiry, who died of sudden infant death syndrome, was buried Aug. 11.

At the funeral, his mother sang *Rock-A-Bye Baby*. And a friend read a poem Perryman had written for Khiry.

The night before Khiry's funeral, Perryman took another step toward a better future for herself and her other three children, ages 5, 2, and 1½.

That night, she and 13 other women gathered to celebrate their graduation from the WORK Toward a New Horizon program.

There were tears, hugs and corsages ... talk of a child's untimely death ... smiles and words of encouragement.

WORK, Women Organizing Resources and Knowledge, is a free, five-week personal-enrichment program for single, unemployed minority mothers.

The women work on building their self-esteem, learning parenting skills and are encouraged to help themselves by preparing for college or a career.

The program, which was held at South Mountain Community Col-

lege, was funded by the college and Wesley United Methodist Church Outreach Ministries. Wesley, in south Phoenix, is the state's only black United Methodist church.

Thanks to WORK, Perryman plans to attend South Mountain College this fall.

"The program taught me to be strong and not to be negative," she said. "Now, I'm very motivated to do what I want, which is working toward my new horizon."

She likes math and "pushing buttons" and plans to take business-related courses.

The young mother also likes to write, what she calls "messing up a whole stack of words."

She'd like to become a published poet.

"You'll see, I'll do it," she says, almost challenging someone to dare her.

Until then, she cares for her children and her three youngest brothers, ages 5, 4 and 2. Her 34-year-old mother, Joyce, was

— See S. MOUNTAIN, page B

## S. Mountain program offers new futures for minority moms

— S. MOUNTAIN, from page A

paralyzed in an accident 1½ years ago and lives with her daughter.

LaVerne Perryman also is earning her general-equivalency diploma and learning how to run business machines, both through a Chicanos Por La Causa program, which provides employment training and other social-services programs.

Perryman's new horizon, she assures you, will not include the Aid for Dependent Children payments or food stamps she now receives.

Sharing in her enthusiasm is Priscilla Ellis, another WORK graduate.

Ellis said she had a problem with "chemicals." She's spent the past 16 months trying to solve it.

The single mother of 14- and 3-year-old sons has been living and learning at the New Arizona Family substance-abuse treatment center in east Phoenix.

"When I came here, I didn't want to live or have anything to do with life," said Ellis, 33. "I'm a different person now. I have goals."

She no longer is in the dorm-like quarters and restricted environment in which those in the year-long intensive-treatment part of the program live.

Sunrise House, a transitional setting on the center's campus, is now home. She can leave when she likes, as

long as she returns by 1 a.m.

"I'm looking for a job, looking for a place to live for me and my boys," said Ellis, whose children live with their grandmother.

"I think I'm ready for that. There's a time when you have to take responsibility for yourself, and now's the time."

Completing the WORK program has been part of taking on new responsibility, she says.

Besides "connecting" with other women who can provide support on the "outside," Ellis learned parenting skills.

"I learned some techniques that I can use with my kids and not whip them all the time," she said. "I want to be able to talk to them, touch them ... hold them close."

Ellis also wants to earn an associate's degree in business management. She'll be a student at South Mountain College this fall.

Books and computers, reading and writing might not be on Ellis' and Perryman's minds these days if it weren't for the efforts of another woman: Jacqueline Mayfield.

Mayfield, 45, a single mother of a 12-year-old son, coordinated the WORK program. She is employed by Wesley and receives a nominal salary.

Although she hadn't planned on playing the part, Mayfield says she hopes the women will consider her a

role model.

"I've certainly experienced some of the same struggles ... and depended on the welfare system," said the woman with the short-cropped hair and two master's degrees.

And the attitudes Mayfield once had when she was making \$30,000 a year as a social worker have changed.

"My attitude was not one of sensitivity to those ... dependent upon the welfare system," she admitted.

"Sometimes we're on our professionalism ride and can't come off that horse and into real life."

Mayfield's ride came to an abrupt end, however, when the federal funds that paid her salary ran out.

"I fell off my horse. I lost my job, lost my pride," she said. "I was faced with the decisions of how to sustain myself and my youngster."

Nine months on welfare helped until she came to Phoenix and was hired by Wesley.

She said the work she's doing with women like Perryman and Ellis "gets to the very meat of what this helping profession is really all about."

Then, still feeling the warmth of new understanding and the satisfaction of helping 14 women move toward new horizons, Mayfield says:

"I'm sort of glad I fell off the horse. Now when I get back on, I'll know how to ride it."