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Graduate: Philadelphia student returns to college 20 years after putting aside her degree

By [Eric Lipton](#) | 11/22/09 10:09 AM



Hildredy Lowe

An ongoing demand from area residents interested in returning their college studies has prompted Graduate! Philadelphia to expand its services to six satellite locations throughout the city.

Graduate! is now at five Community Centers in Center City, both Philadelphia, Northwest Philadelphia and Germantown. It also provides college advising and success services at OCPA Services' Benjamin Center in Kensington, and at Catholic Social Services' Westfall Family Service Center. The new locations bring the free Graduate! Philadelphia services into the neighborhoods and make them more accessible for residents.

"The new locations are a great opportunity for individuals to access "open the shopping" for college right in their neighborhood, you can talk with representatives of 15 different colleges, file for financial aid, get advice about next steps, make a plan, all not far from where you live or work," said Hildredy Lowe, Executive Director of Graduate! Philadelphia. "We've designed so many courses backers have chosen to return to college and complete their degrees."

Graduate! Philadelphia was founded in 2005 in response to the critical shortage of adults with college degrees in the region's workforce. At the time, more than 80,000 Philadelphia residents had some college credits but no degree. Graduate! chose not getting a college degree brings the life opportunities and about \$1 million more in wages over a lifetime career. In 2006, Graduate! Philadelphia began offering adult's free innovative college access and success services, which guide prospective adult learners through college access opportunities to graduation with a two- or four-year college degree.

Fifteen colleges and universities participate in the Graduate! Philadelphia Initiative. They were selected for their high graduation rates, adult-friendly services, courses that are flexible, focused and convenient for adults, and all are fully racially accessible.

Primary concern, Lowe packages the post-graduate! course backer's bag. Physical problems have plagued Lowe and her family over the years, but with her health improving, the one-time corrections officer has started Graduate! Philadelphia in 2008, creating that all she had not had college. There she started assisting on a teacher's degree she put aside in 1980. Lowe is making it happen in human services, with a focus in psychology.

Lowe, 38, even made the dean's list and is on track to graduate in the spring of 2011.

Lowe anticipates a new career as a life coach.

"I want to teach people to empower themselves," she said.

About Graduate! Philadelphia

Graduate! Philadelphia is an initiative of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania to increase the number of working adults with college degrees in the Greater Philadelphia region. For more information, please visit www.GraduatePhiladelphia.org

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- Business
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- Archive
- RSS Feeds
- News Columns
- FROM OUR READERS
- Letters to the Editor
- Reader's Comments
- Submit Your Comments
- GALLERY
- View Events
- PICTURE GALLERY
- Photos Wanted
- OC PA GOV Partnership
- Site Feedback
- CLASSIFIEDS
- Place Classifieds
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