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NJDOL Apprenticeship Gives Home Health Aides Expertise to Care for Clients with Dementia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 8, 2023

TRENTON – After cycling through 12 home health aides and three nursing homes in three years, Jonathan Sym doubted he'd ever be able to hire a suitable caretaker for his 85-year-old father, who has dementia. Then he found Amanda Ruiz-Taveras, an experienced in-home care provider who became a Certified Dementia Practitioner after completing a 155-hour Registered Apprenticeship funded by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Ruiz-Taveras is among the first class of seven Certified Home Health Aides who completed the 12-month training offered by their employer, Home Instead of Millburn, which provides personal care for elderly, chronically ill, hospice – and, yes, Alzheimer's and dementia – clients.

"She came in and completely changed our lives," says Sym, a Navy officer who can be deployed and away from home for long stretches. "She gave us back our father. She made him laugh again."

The Registered Apprenticeship in dementia care is funded by Growing Apprenticeship in Nontraditional Sectors (GAINS) grants, which are awarded to upgrade the skills of employees and provide career pathways in fields seeing a surge in demand, such as health care.

"As we've shown through the dementia care apprenticeship, workers in virtually every occupation and career can learn and grow and advance their careers through this earn-as-you-learn model," said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo, who attended the recognition – or "pinning" – ceremony for the newly certified practitioners. "Apprenticeship continues to be a huge win for our state, especially in recovering from the pandemic and training workers in industries that need skilled staff the most."

Baron-Queen Inc., which does business as Home Instead, has been awarded GAINS grants covering three classes of dementia-care apprentices, the most recent for nearly \$600,000 for 60 apprentices this year. The one-year program is recognized as a Registered Apprenticeship by the US Department of Labor.

"Currently, New Jersey has a tremendous void in the number of Certified Home Health Aides (CHHA), trained to care for individuals suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Funding from the GAINS grant program has transformed our company's ability to support employees to better care for clients," said Chris Capobianco, Director of Employee Training & Retention for Home Instead.

"Ultimately, the Certified Dementia Practitioner, CDP, certification gives Certified Home Health Aides the skills necessary to manage this devastating and incurable disease, as well as give families the peace of mind to be able to keep their loved ones at home."

Apprenticeship has been a hallmark of Gov. Phil Murphy's administration, with more than 8,000 apprentices currently enrolled in 1,100 different programs – an 87 percent increase over the prior administration. Roughly \$28 million has been invested in apprenticeship grants since 2019, including unprecedented opportunities for women and people of color, especially among GAINS grantees.

For additional information on NJDOL apprenticeship opportunities, please visit apprenticeship.nj.gov.

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