STORY OF IMPACT
ASHANTI'S FUTURE IS BRIGHT IN FORD HEIGHTS

Ashanti wants to be a pharmacy technician, security guard, small business owner, and nurse. She's working hard to make her future career—all of them—a reality.

Ashanti is from the south suburbs of Chicago. She was born and raised in Markham and recently moved into her first apartment in nearby Ford Heights. The village is small, with a population of just 1,800. Despite more than 37% of its residents living in poverty, Ford Heights is a tight-nit, welcoming community.

"I've connected with a lot of people who been here for generations on generations," Ashanti said. "I feel like the community brings a lot of effort and attention and focus on each other. They love each other here."

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>
> **ASHANTI**

But when Ashanti moved to Ford Heights, she was at a crossroads. "I was at a point in my life where I didn't know what I was going to do. I couldn't afford college. I didn't have a good paying job," she said. Amid these challenges, Ashanti's new community embraced her and recommended Ashanti for the workforce development program at Cornerstone Community Development Corporation.

The local nonprofit is the lead agency of the Ford Heights/Chicago Heights Neighborhood Network, which launched in June 2023 in partnership with United Way of Metro Chicago and Cook County's Transforming Places Program.

Ashanti is a graduate of Cornerstone's hands-on workforce development program. After six weeks of training, she received certifications in construction forklift and flagger, first aid and CPR, and armed and unarmed security.

Ashanti said these certifications will open up new job opportunities and provide financial stability, while helping her take the next steps in her career. "I feel like this program helped put a career in my path and helped me be able to eventually afford college," Ashanti said. "Now I'm certified, and I'm a professional and have the skills for the work I want to do." ●

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