



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

IMPACT PROFILE: EH KAW HTOO



FINDING INCLUSION AND SUPPORT FAR FROM HOME THROUGH ACCELERATING OPPORTUNITY

Eh Kaw Htoo was born in Burma, but was exiled to a refugee camp in Thailand with his family at a very young age. He called the refugee camp “home” for the majority of his childhood and teenage years. Unfortunately, the harsh realities of life in a refugee camp meant that academics and planning for the future had to take a back seat to the necessities of day-to-day survival.

In 2008, Eh Kaw Htoo sought asylum in the United States, and he eventually arrived in the state of Georgia. He and his wife both found jobs working on the assembly line at a chicken plant, but they always remained ambitious for something more. By talking to coworkers at the plant, they learned about attending a local community college to

earn credentials toward a vocational certification. Eh Kaw decided to continue working so his wife could focus on school and attaining her GED.

While helping his wife register for classes at Athens Technical College, Eh Kaw met an Accelerating Opportunity faculty member who persuaded him to also enroll in GED classes and pursue a certification of his own.

“When I moved to Athens, Georgia, the language was hard for me. The culture was hard for me,” says Eh Kaw. “I was working at a plant all day with no hope. Accelerating

Opportunity changed all of that for me. I became inspired, met many fellow students and began to work toward my future.”



Eh Kaw Htoo and his family.

Eh Kaw was hesitant, but went ahead and dual enrolled in classes for his GED and a certification in machine tool technology. He had initially been nervous to begin his coursework while holding his job, but with Accelerating

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Opportunity classes being offered earlier in the day, he was able to continue working in the afternoon and evenings.

He quickly assimilated into his new classroom environment and took any chance he had to network with classmates and faculty members. The amount of support and encouragement Eh Kaw received made him finally feel at home in his new country.



Eh Kaw Htoo's home in the refugee camp.

By earning his GED and pursuing a career pathway in machine tool technology, Eh Kaw was able to secure a full-time position creating airplane parts at a local aerospace company. He now has the salary, benefits, and job security that he needs to successfully support his growing family.

Eh Kaw is continuing to work toward earning his associate's degree, which he expects to earn by the end of this academic year. From there, he hopes to pursue a bachelor's degree and says the sky is truly the limit as to what he accomplishes next.

“Accelerating Opportunity gave me the college experience I never could even dream of as a little boy in a refugee camp,” says Eh Kaw. “I have been able to meet so many peers, employers, and professors in the past few years. I am excited now to continue my studies and provide a good life for my wife and three kids.”



Eh Kaw Htoo's elementary school in the refugee camp.

Accelerating Opportunity increases the number of adults with low basic skills who enter postsecondary education and quickly earn credentials that lead to high-demand, living-wage jobs. The national initiative integrates Adult Basic Education with career and technical education and comprehensive support services into clear pathways that promote student success and meet the needs of local employers.

Jobs for the Future works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy. Across the country, we work to improve the pathways leading from high school to college to family-supporting careers. Our work aligns education and training to ensure that employers have access to a skilled workforce.



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