

APPRENTICE STORY

MARIA HOLMES MURPHY

BUSINESS
OPERATIONS



PROPERTY
CASUALTY REP

“ I NOW FEEL MORE
PREPARED FOR WHAT THE
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Maria describes herself as a shy, quiet person, and someone who is a hands-on learner. The traditional school environment is a challenge for her. Since she became an apprentice through CareerWise’s modern youth-apprenticeship program in 2017, she has come out of her shell, is learning new skills and looks forward to attending college.

EYE ON THE FUTURE

Maria is a junior at Abraham Lincoln High School in Denver. When she and a friend attended an information meeting about CareerWise’s apprenticeship program, she decided to check it out.

“It sounded like a great opportunity to get the work experience I will need in the future,” Maria said. She was also attracted to the opportunity to earn up to 30 hours of debt-free college credit.

Hired as a property casualty representative at Holmes Murphy, a national brokerage firm with a Denver branch, Maria assists various departments. She supports projects ranging from client invoicing to reviewing client insurance policies, and recently helped organize an event.

Maria has learned to use Excel spreadsheets and other software tools, tasks she finds rewarding because they involve math—a subject for which she has a deep affinity. She is interested in pursuing a bachelor’s degree at Metro State University after she completes her apprenticeship, with an eye on becoming an accountant.

Previously, Maria already had her eye on college. But being an apprentice has confirmed her plans to continue studying—and solidified her vision for the future.

“I might like a full-time job like this later. I want to go into business,” she said. Her CareerWise apprenticeship is providing the perspective she needs to make informed decisions about why further higher education is important to her career goals.

LEARNING TIME MANAGEMENT & SELF-ADVOCACY

Maria is developing technical skills through a hands-on environment where she can learn by doing. But she is also developing skills she hadn't considered—such as how to manage her time better. Attending school three days per week and going to work twice weekly, she has figured out how to prioritize tasks and balance her time between school, work and social activities.

"I'm more responsible. It's some challenging stuff, but I've learned how to get over it and overcome," she said.

Maria has also learned to advocate for herself. As a shy person, she traditionally stayed quiet when she needed help, but that has changed now. For example, she had been struggling with understanding her pre-calculus homework, and therefore wasn't turning in the assignments. In the past, Maria would have let these assignments—and her grades—slide. But because her apprentice experience has taught her to speak up more, Maria approached her school's assistant principal, a former teacher, for assistance. He tutored her and gave her helpful explanations, enabling her to complete the homework and boost her grade.

She attributes this new skill to her apprenticeship. "Now I tell people what I want and need," she said.

OVERCOMING INITIAL FEARS

During the apprenticeship application process, Maria spent a significant amount of time writing cover letters, developing her resume and doing mock interviews. She applied for three apprenticeships—and when Holmes Murphy requested to meet with her, she was nervous. It would be her first-ever interview.

"I didn't know how to communicate and didn't know what kinds of questions they would ask," she said, and feared being rejected. However, she felt that all the advance preparation was very helpful, and her confidence lifted when she was hired for the job.

Then, her worry turned to a more social one: she was concerned about not making friends. Getting together with the entire apprentice cohort on a regular basis has eased her anxieties and created a sense of community. "Now, it's crazy, we're all together and support each other."

Having that extended network of apprentices is a good complement to the support Maria gets at Holmes Murphy every time she goes to her job. "They are really positive. They joke around and motivate me to keep going."

PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE

Through her apprenticeship, Maria has learned that there are many opportunities out there for her, and she is ready for what lies ahead.

"I now feel more prepared for what the real world looks like. I am more mature and am making good decisions."

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