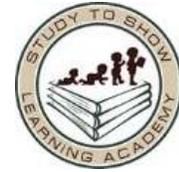


Study to Show Learning Academy



Stephanie Searles used the child care course as a springboard to enroll in JWBC's Financial Matters course, where mentors work closely with participants on the nuts-and-bolts of running a business and keeping it solvent. After completing both courses, she started a new business under the umbrella of her at-home child care business.

A former school teacher and mother of home-schooled daughters ages 13 and 6, Searles started providing child care in 2010, the same year she connected with a financial aid program by Family Foundations—another link in the solid support system available to local women with various aspirations. She chose to use the financial assistance to expand her business. "I branched out to start a photography business that serves the home-based child," she said. "I saw a need for that."

The foundation's Individual Development Account Program is a savings and match program created to help working low-income individuals achieve self-sufficiency. It includes education on budgeting, saving and one-on-one counseling. Its Jacksonville program "has helped numerous people attain assets, including purchasing a new home, starting or expanding a small business, or furthering their education," said its vice president, Martha Cox.

In addition to her main business, Study to Show Learning Academy in West Jacksonville, Searles now runs two other businesses, Simply Stunning Photography, and Safe & Secure CPR/AED and First Aid Training, which she already had. "I was able to pull money from my day care to start the new business and pay the day care back," said Searles, crediting JWBC's Financial Matters course for providing the knowledge and guidance to move forward.

She maintains that marketing is key.

"I speak more highly of myself now that I have taken the course," said Searles. "I'm able to articulate what my benefits are and why I am better than other child care homes."

"We challenge them on marketing, who their customer truly is, even pricing ... and getting them comfortable with getting up and explaining everything about their business and how their business plan works," Monahan said.