

NEW HOUSING AUTHORITY RESIDENT MAKING A CAREER



Over the course of the last year, Rauwban Willis has turned his life around through fortitude and perseverance. Beginning with regular job searching at the WAGE Center, Rauwban was determined to better his situation. At the time, Rauwban did not have a regular place to call home or dependable employment.

Gradually, he began to get current experience by working at Labor Ready and began studying with the Adult Education Program Manager for his high school equivalency diploma. He availed himself of the employment counseling and resume development services at the WAGE Center.

The WAGE Center maintains a relationship with the management and employers at the Port of Albany, which encouraged Rauwban to pursue the opportunity to work loading and unloading docked ships. These jobs start at just under \$20/hour and carry the possibility of overtime, wage increases, and potential membership in the International Longshoremen's Union. Becoming a Longshoreman allows for the opportunity to earn wage increases and access to generous benefits and training.

The process of obtaining regular employment as a Longshoreman in Albany involves reporting to the gate on Smith Street at 7:45 am prepared to work and pass a drug test. Each day, laborers are selected based upon the amount of work to be done and their prior experience at the port. So, work is not guaranteed. As a result, Rauwban still supplements his work at the port with jobs at Labor Ready. But, there are opportunities to become a part of the union if a laborer continues to create a track record and log hours.

As a Housing Authority resident, Rauwban has qualified to become a part of the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program. Through work and wage increases, the program ultimately allows for participants to escrow money throughout the course five years to use toward goals aimed at becoming entirely self sufficient. Many participants have purchased vehicles, paid down debt in preparation for obtaining a mortgage and have even made substantial down payments toward homeownership. Participants are regularly counseled and advised in the many resources available to step toward solid budgeting and how to position a family to achieve their goals.

From homelessness to living wage employment and a new apartment, Rauwban has achieved huge strides since his first visit to the WAGE Center. With the FSS program and work at the port, he can continue to achieve his personal and professional goals.