

IMPACT PROFILE: NASTASSIA SCOTT



NEW SKILLS, NEW JOB, AND A RENEWED OPPORTUNITY

A Conversation with Nastassia Scott, a graduate of the Pathways to Manufacturing Initiative offered by Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) of Hartford, CT, in partnership with Asnuntuck Community College located in Enfield, CT.

This interview was conducted by Mamadou Ndiaye, senior program manager at Jobs for the Future.

MN: *Tell me about your background: Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school, and what was school like for you?*

NS: I was born and raised in the wonderful and beautiful island of Jamaica, until the age of 11 when I moved to the United States with my mother to live in Hartford with my grandfather. When we got to Hartford, everything went very fast. We arrived on a Saturday night in the freezing cold, went to church on Sunday morning, and by Monday morning I was enrolled in Rawson Elementary School. After Rawson Elementary School, I attended Lewis Fox Middle School which definitely had its ups and downs with fights, lockdowns, and riots, but there were also fun times with fun people that I'm still friends with to this day.

I attended high school in Connecticut for two years until my mom and I moved to south Florida where I continued high school at Deerfield Beach High School. Deerfield was awesome, and my senior was the best. I made lots of friends, was Student Government President, an Auxiliary Dancer, a member of the Best Buddies Association, and I played sports like flag football and soccer. I graduated high school in 2011 and enrolled at Tallahassee Community College.

MN: *From Tallahassee Community College, you returned to Connecticut to attend Asnuntuck Community College. Why did you leave Florida and what did you hope to accomplish by returning?*

NS: At Tallahassee Community College, I majored in business management. My first semester was great, and I completed all my classes with passing grades. During my second semester, I started questioning the path I was taking. Here I was, a college student, sitting in an earth science class about to give a presentation about how hurricanes are formed, and I asked myself, what does this have to do with business? How would knowing about the formation of a hurricane be useful in my goal to start a business? I left Tallahassee and transferred home to Broward Community College. After another year, I was still stuck in general courses, and I started thinking that maybe the business path was not right one for me, so I dropped out and moved back to Hartford.

MN: *From there how did you connect with OPP and Asnuntuck Community College?*

NS: I moved back to Hartford in early February 2013. I wasn't going to school or working, but I was helping my mother out in her business. It was there I met Ms. Carmen from OPP who was promoting the Pathway to Manufacturing Initiative. She invited me to an open house, and I decided to go because I really had nothing else to do anyway. At the OPP open house, they went into more details about how they could help us, and we took a trip to Asnuntuck Community College to tour the school and manufacturing department. I decided to enroll in the program because it was very hands-on and unlike anything else I did in college. Everything they taught and everything we learned was relevant, and it's what we will be doing in the field.

MN: *What helped you succeed in your classes and internship in the Pathways to Manufacturing program at Asnuntuck?*

NS: The number one thing that helped me succeed was my strong support system. I knew that if I failed, I would not only fail myself but also everyone else that was rooting for me—people like my mother, my friends and family, and Randal and Ms. Carmen from OPP. Randal and Ms. Carmen were with me every step of the way, so much so that if I missed a day I would get nonstop phone calls or text messages. They were always interested in other ways they could help me succeed, and for that I thank them.

MN: *How did you end up getting a job at Mallory Industries?*

NS: At Asnuntuck, after completing level one with passing grades and great reviews, you can move up to the more advanced class, level two. Students are also given the opportunity to start an internship. The coordinator set us up with interviews at different manufacturing companies with the hope that we would get one. Before Mallory Industries, I had gone on two interviews with other students, but I wasn't chosen. My interview at Mallory went very well and within a week they decided to offer me an internship. I started as an intern in February and they hired me full time after my graduation from the Pathway to Manufacturing Initiative in May.

MN: *What do you do in your job, and what do you like about working at Mallory Industries?*

NS: At Mallory I work in the Quality Assurance department inspecting parts. I love everything about the job. One of the best parts is that it is such a clean environment and my co-workers are awesome. I get a lot of support and even though I am out of school they still take time to teach me and make sure I understand the different processes and techniques. Even when it is a lot of pressure, there is a lot of support.

MN: *What are your career goals? What would you like to be doing in the next few years?*

NS: I plan to go back to school to study engineering. In 10 years, I plan be in manufacturing because as a quality engineer there is so much you can do. Starting off so young, I feel that I can make my mark in the manufacturing field as a dominant black woman and to set a path for other women to join the field. Right now it is so male driven, and I hope to change that.

MN: *What advice would you give to other young people who want to get into the manufacturing field but don't know how or where to start?*

NS: My advice would be to do research while keeping an open mind. Go to different facilities, take tours, talk to people, and find programs and organizations that will help you make it easier to be successful. A person never knows if he or she is going to love or hate something if they don't try first. Also, be around people that are genuinely there to support you, and you will go a far way. If you know that you love hands-on work then the technical field is definitely for you. Just take the first step, and the first step is research.

MN: *What services did OPP provide you that were particularly helpful, including after employment?*

NS: Upon entry to Asnuntuck, OPP helped by providing us with computers and giving us one-on-one help to apply for financial aid. They bought all the books that we needed for our classes including our book bags and pencils. Anything we needed they made sure we had. We also received transportation to school and back. I had a car, but they gave others bus cards to go home and to arrive at OPP. During school they helped me get a job so I can learn how to balance work, school, and my personal life. Even now, they still call me at Mallory to check up on how everything is going.

MN: *What advice would you give to programs like OPP and Asnuntuck working with young people like yourself? How can they better serve young people?*

NS: My advice is to keep helping. Without programs like OPP and Asnuntuck, I won't say young people wouldn't do well, but having their support definitely makes it easier for young people to do their best. Programs like these are successful because they provide young people with the resources they need to succeed.

MN: *Anything else you'd like to share?*

NS: I would like to thank Ms. Carmen and Randal from OPP for giving me the opportunity and the resources I needed to get me this far. Now I'm at a point in my life where I'm truly happy and life is just a little bit easier.

The **Pathway to Manufacturing Initiative** is supported by a grant from the **National Fund for Workforce Solutions** and **Jobs for the Future** under the **Youth Industry Partnership Initiative** (YIPI). The OPP and Asnuntuck Community College partnership is one of six programs around the country that helps young adults enter careers in high-demand industries. As national intermediaries, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions and Jobs for the Future aim to use lessons learned from the six communities to inform programming and policymaking to help more young people get jobs that align with their aspirations and lead to family-supporting careers.

As the numbers of youth disconnected to the workforce continue to rise, the **National Fund's** Young Adult Initiatives are aimed at testing and implementing new strategies for targeting America's opportunity youth. Started in 2013 with the Youth/Industry Partnership Initiative (YIPI), the Young Adults Initiatives have funded the development and evaluation of innovative methods aimed at engaging young adults. After an initial evaluation of these strategies under the Youth/Industry Partnership Initiative (YIPI), the National Fund is expanding the evaluation of these solutions through its Annie E. Casey Young Adult Project to better understand how industry partnerships and employers can most effectively engage youth.

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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