

## **French Street Café Presents Cake to TCTC Student**



**Jamie Allen: Lost and Found**

On Wednesday, October 8, Jamie Allen was called to the office at the TCTC. It wasn't like she didn't know the way. During the previous school year, she made several trips, but they didn't make for fond memories. By her own admission, she had a negative attitude, failing grades, and poor attendance. This trip was of a different nature. Jamie emerged with a smile on her face and a fresh baked cake donated by the French Street Café. The dessert was a tangible reward for the complete turnaround she has made in school. Brigitte Gillies, one of her program instructors said, "During my 16 years at the TCTC, no student has improved as much as Jamie. She has done a complete 180."

At the start of the 2007 school year, Jamie was very frustrated. "I did not want to be at the TCTC because I thought the academics were too hard and the rules in my program were too strict. My mother and grandmother had other ideas. They insisted that I stay at least for the year because they felt I needed a change in direction."

During the first semester of the previous school year, Jamie continued to run in place. "I was in the clinic as much as in the classroom. I just didn't care about anything connected with school." Several conversations with concerned adults caused her to rethink her priorities. Jamie stated, "It was the dream of my mother and grandmother that I graduate from high school. They told me it would be one of the biggest days in their lives to see me walk across the stage at commencement ceremonies. I knew that unless I shaped up, this was not going to happen."

Jim Antenucci, Restaurant Service Instructor, decided to toss a carrot in Jamie's direction. He told her that if she promised not to miss school and to complete all of her assigned work, he would give her the opportunity to become the Junior Manager of the student restaurant at the TCTC. Jamie was touched by this gesture. She said, "I knew that Mr. A believed in me and I didn't want to let him or Mrs. Gillies down. My self esteem improved and I began to take responsibility for my actions. Gradually, I began to see a relationship between success in life and success in school. There is nothing I can do about the past, but I resolved to make every moment count in the future." Jamie started the present school year on the same

positive note. Recently, she was appointed to the position of Senior General Manager of the student restaurant.

Jeff McClain was Jamie's science teacher during the past school year. He was also impressed with her growth in maturity and performance. "Jamie evolved from being one of the worst students in my class to becoming one of my best. She not only did her work, she helped other students with their work. I nominated her for Student of the Month in May because of her efforts."

After graduation in June, Jamie plans on attending the Pennsylvania Culinary Institute in Pittsburgh. She will obtain an Associates Degree in Culinary Arts with the goal of becoming a Chef who prepares meals for individuals with disabilities.

Life is not a fairy tales with guaranteed happy endings, but the TCTC is placing their chips on the slot marked Jamie Allen. She has come too far and worked too hard to abandon her goals. She is the epitome of the Turnaround Kid.

So Jamie, enjoy that cake, but save a slice for mom, grandma, and your teachers at the TCTC. On graduation day in June, you will stand on their shoulders.

