



Student Stories

How CATC changes lives, gives hope and opportunity



“We knew it would be a blast--it's Great American Ballpark! We'd be meeting new people and it's our first paid gig ever. It feels good, especially when you have school to pay for.”
-- Souadou and Sonna D., CATC and BTG graduates 2013

They speak as one. They look so much alike, customers do a double take when they're on elevator duty as summer interns at Great American Ballpark. Both girls aspire to careers as nurses and through the CATC Bridging the Gap workforce development program they are on their way. They start U.C. nursing school in the fall of 2014.

But for Sonna and Souadou, the summer of 2014 has been all about their jobs at Great American Ballpark. When the opportunity came up, they dropped other summer plans and grabbed it, one of the lessons they say they learned at CATC: "To be grateful," they chorus, "and to take opportunities."

There's no official Reds internship program, just generous management that sometimes offers internship slots for CATC students who are college-bound and show leadership potential. The opportunity isn't just handed out, though, you have to apply and interview. The sisters had graduated the previous year, but "I pulled out my old life skills binder from Bridging the Gap and it helped in the interview," Souadou says. They practiced together.

Both girls got the job and the lessons have continued. "We went through orientation and they told us to be patient, don't change your tone of voice, and the customer is always right," recites Souadou. Most of the time the fans are happy and excited, but once in awhile they get lost, or get on the wrong elevator, maybe miss the first pitch and it can be frustrating. It's a big ball park, but if they come to me I usually get them to the right place," says Sonna, "and if I don't know, I direct them to someone who does. Even when people are rude to me, I have a smile on my face."

The pay will help with college. "It's our first paid gig ever and it feels good, especially when you have school to pay for," they agree. Plus it's great practice for their careers. Here they amplify each other's thoughts: "Like being approachable and patient with people. As nurses, we'll have to be very patient with children and parents," they say. "And proactive, like paying attention to the game so we can answer fans' questions about the score or what inning the game is in. Or if someone looks lost, saying 'can I help you?'"

They love the interactions with fans, including the many repeat customers. "Especially the children, they're so happy; they have their mitts ready to catch balls and when the mascots come on the elevator, they're so excited," says Souadou.

With high school, then first year of college, the sisters hadn't had much time to be sports fans, but both are now enthusiastic Reds fans. They say "enjoy the game" to every fan exiting their elevators. That's something these newly created Reds fans plan to do for the rest of their lives.