

# Lee County Dislocated Worker earns Associate's Degree

*Fall 2013*

Karen Nelson Frazier learned that her job at Pilgrim's Pride Plant in Siler City, NC would end on March 23, 2008. The first thing that came to her mind was "what I am going to do now". The 48 year-old dislocated worker decided to take the time to go back to school to pursue her dreams of higher education. Karen met with Mrs. Edith Edmond, former manager of the Lee County Employment Security Commission, and learned that she could go back to school to earn a degree under the WIA program.

Karen's educational journey wasn't without its difficulties. Frazier's unemployment benefits ran out in February 2011 - about three months before she was to graduate. Without any income, it became difficult to continue attending classes and keeping up with the bills. "I kept with it, though. I told myself I'd come too far to quit now," she said. Frazier also saw her teenage daughter graduate from high school and get accepted to a state university - which came at no small expense. She also dealt with having no medical insurance for three years. "I took ibuprofen for anything that hurt and just prayed that something more serious didn't come along," she said.

Frazier graduated from CCCC on May 17<sup>th</sup> with her Associate of Applied Science in Medical Office Administration. Now, she has her degree, as well as a job at the Siler City Community Health Center. "I was so blessed to get a job right here in Siler City," she said, adding that she's already laying the groundwork for getting a bachelor's degree through online coursework. "I'm glad I went back to school," she said. "I'd recommend it to anyone."

