

## Woman gets second chance at education

Aug. 14, 2003

**Sherkiya Wedgeworth**  
Staff Writer

Not a single woman in five generations of Keema Richardson's family was able to accomplish what she was able to do last week.

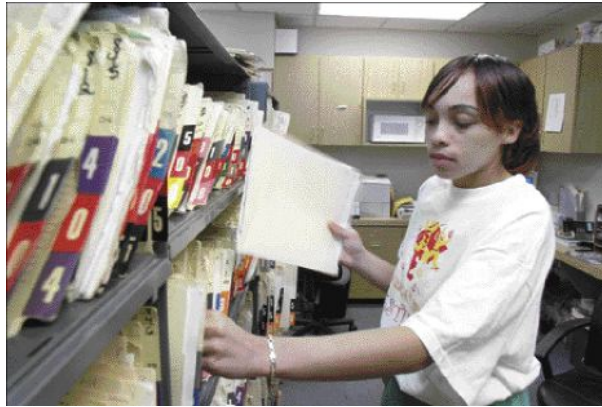
Richardson, 22, received her high school diploma Aug. 7.

"I prayed for it," said the Hyattsville mother of two. "I think if [the other women] in my family would have known that your education is your worth, they would have made more for themselves, too."

Through Community-Based Classroom (CBC) in Lanham, Richardson was able to obtain her Northwestern High School diploma, even though she dropped out in 1999. The program, a part of the county school system, offers classes 10 hours a week for a longer period of time to students with hardships, including those who are parents or have had run-ins with the law.

"CBC is a critical importance for the students who don't fit into the boxes of regular high school," said Maureen Fuller, a CBC program coordinator of 14 years. "They may have other needs that preclude their attending a five-day [per week] program."

Although it took Richardson three years to complete her senior year of high school, she said it meant more to her than getting a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Unlike receiving a GED after passing a paid exam, Richardson has an actual diploma from Hyattsville's Northwestern High, the



**Bryan Haynes/The Gazette**

**Keema Richardson, 22, files records at her job at a doctor's office in Greenbelt.**

**Richardson, a Hyattsville resident, is a recent graduate of the Lanham-based Community-Based Classroom, where she was able to get her high school diploma, work full time and take care of her two children.**

An advertisement for Ashby Tanner, a Legal Advertising Manager. The ad features a green and white color scheme. At the top, it says "YOUR CHOICE FOR LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS AND PUBLIC NOTICES" in green. To the right, there is a small image of "The Gazette" newspaper with the headline "POWERING UP". Below the headline, there is a portrait of a smiling woman, presumably Ashby Tanner. The text below the portrait reads: "Attorney's, Auction Firms, State, County, and Local Municipalities, Advertise their Public Notices in Maryland's Paper of Record. Call Today!" followed by a bulleted list of services: "Certificates of publication and tearsheets provided", "Accurate statements and bills", "Competitive market pricing", "Error free proofing services", and "Experienced and knowledgeable staff". At the bottom, the name "ASHBY TANNER" is written in large green letters, with "Legal Advertising Manager" and the phone number "301-670-2620" below it.

school she last attended before dropping out in 1999.

"She was very dedicated," said Rita Eisenberg, who has been a CBC guidance counselor since the school was founded in 1989. "Keema was able to work most of the time and take care of two children [and attend class] in an organized and intelligent way."

Richardson said until her senior year of high school, she was on her way to graduating on time, but then her grandmother became ill and she became pregnant with her first child.

Between taking care of her sick grandmother and a newborn baby, she was overwhelmed with responsibilities. Eventually she missed so many days of school that she was too far behind to graduate.

At the age of 20, her grandmother passed away, followed by her mother less than three months later.

"At 20, I made funeral arrangements for my grandmother and had my mother cremated -- all by myself," Richardson said. "My life was in so much chaos. I just didn't know which way to go."

She said that knowing that she needed an education to have a better life for her children motivated her to complete the program. Her next goal is to attend community college and then become a registered nurse.

For more information about CBC, call 301-918-8726.