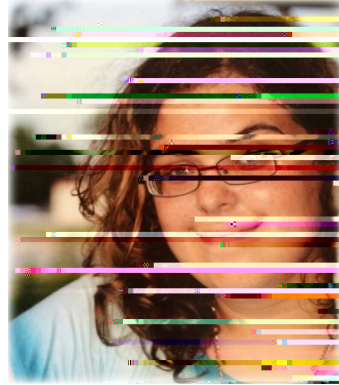


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Rodriguez

Lillie



Abraham Rodriguez participated in Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP (KKGU) from 2005 to 2009. He received his undergraduate degree in accounting from Wichita State. Currently, he is a Value Stream Mapping (VSM) Process Innovation Team. He is instrumental in transforming processes and leveraging technology to help people create more value for internal and external customers.

Rodriguez was selected as an honoree because he has demonstrated persistence and resilience. He worked hard and never gave up on his goal of obtaining a degree. Despite the obstacles and challenges he faced, he continues to be positive and has high expectations of himself.

Rodriguez states, "TRIO and GEAR UP were the catalysts that enabled me to become the person I am today." He further credits his incredible mentors from those programs who invested in him and supported him during high school and college. "They helped cast a vision for my future, one that was much bigger than I ever would have dreamed for myself," he says. He goes on to say that if not for the people in TRIO and GEAR UP, he would not get to "work with incredible people, doing amazing things, learning more than I ever imagined and enjoying every aspect of it."

He advises students to challenge themselves and keep growing, to rise to the occasion in all that they do, and to try their best to take every opportunity to be successful.

KKGU has transformed the life of a student named Lillie by providing support, mentoring, networking opportunities, and elevating her collegiate goals. She has been in foster care since elementary school, and for most of her childhood, she has