

100 Years...100 Stories

Throughout this month, we will be featuring Arkansas stories from yesterday and today to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month along with celebrating 100 years of Vocational Rehabilitation, 75 years of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and 30 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

James Thomas

Mr. Thomas came to ARS with a condition that required multiple surgeries and eventually changed the sound of his voice. However, this was not a bother to Mr. Thomas. He came in and, without any hesitation, stated he would like to obtain his CDL license to be able to start a career driving trucks. Mr. Thomas was always on time for every appointment and turned in all documents promptly. Mr. Thomas had a goal in mind and was determined to achieve it. He attended CDL training at Pine Bluff Truck Driving school and received his certificate on February 17, 2020, and his



license soon after that. Mr. Thomas began working at Transamerica in April 2020 as a Truck Driver. He states that he enjoys his new career, and he is appreciative of all the assistance ARS has provided for him.

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Aubrey Copeland *in his own words.*

"You can't always get what you want."

It seems like that's the oldest cliché in the book, yet up until recently, that adage was a pretty good summary of how my life has been. I was 31-years-old, still living with my parents, and unable to hold down a job. I knew something was keeping me from reaching my full potential, but I didn't know what it was.

Finally, after getting let go from a job for "asking the same questions every day," I



decided I'd had enough. So, I applied to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and something magical happened. Very slowly, my life started getting better.

As a first step, they diagnosed my problem: Inattentive ADHD with an anxiety disorder. They then recommended a work-training program called Project I SEARCH. While it may sound like a simple program designed to help people with disabilities find work, it has meant so much more than that to me. I have a mild

disability that makes keeping a job more difficult, but thanks to the training that Project SEARCH provided, I've acquired job skills that I'll have for the rest of my life.

Fast forward a few months, the same person who was fired is now working at Walmart and is well on his way to reaching the probation period for the first time. I've now got consistent hours

(working 40 hours a week every week), I'm getting close to being able to move out on my own, and I've even put a down payment on a car in my name.

If you or someone you care about is disabled and needs job skills to make you more employable, I cannot suggest Project I SEARCH enough. It is a great program, run by even better people, and you've got their support every step of the way. If that's not a five-star endorsement, I don't know what is.

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Alex Solis

Alex is a 2020 graduate of Project SEARCH Autism Enhancement Embassy Suites Rogers, AR. In March 2020, Alex was hired to work in the Bentonville School cafeteria at a local junior high. Because of the school shut down he was unable to start that job as quickly as planned. He pursued employment at Walmart in the Online Grocery Pick-up department in April and was hired and has worked 20-30 hours a week at Walmart since that time. He is currently working 20 hours a week at his job in the Bentonville Schools cafeteria and 20 hours per week at Walmart. Alex manages his schedules well and continues to impress our staff and the staff at both of his places of employment.

