

Pathways to Competitive Integrated Employment

Laney's Story

Meet Laney, a vibrant individual whose journey from sheltered work to integrated employment is a testament to the power of community and personal connections.

Laney's story emphasizes the importance of networking and seeking support from those who care about her. With the encouragement and guidance of her supportive parents, she leveraged their connections to find a fulfilling job that aligns with her interests and allows her to build meaningful relationships with her coworkers.

Background

Laney lives with her mom and stepdad. She finds joy in everyday activities and makes time for them. Laney enjoys being active in her social life. She looks forward to field trips with her day services program and a lunch club she attends. Laney also enjoys camping, which she does often with her family. She gained valuable experience early in her career, which helped her determine her ideal job characteristics.



One of the most important is scheduling adaptability, which allows her to enjoy a meaningful family life. Laney works one hour per week in New Holland in an office setting. Her work involves putting postage on envelopes and shredding documents, tasks she approaches with pride and proficiency, needing little training thanks to her innate skills, as well as some transferable skills thanks to her previous work experience.

Finding Purpose at Work

Laney is surrounded by supportive co-workers and finds joy in her tasks, especially when her boss makes work fun. She values Carla's assistance and appreciates her colleagues' camaraderie, including a family member among them. Their patience and encouragement help her feel competent and confident in her role.

For more information: [Center on Community Living and Careers/Employment](#)

Laney is interested in increasing her work hours and exploring new job opportunities, like organizing. She finds numbers fascinating and hopes to work more closely with them one day. She is incredibly thankful for the support given by her job coach, Carol. She treasures the guidance and 1-on-1 learning opportunities, finding comfort in their shared interests and conversations about family camping trips.

Working in the community has enriched Laney's life, granting her a sense of responsibility and the chance to learn new skills, like organizing paperwork and using a calculator. She cherishes her time with family and friends, enjoying activities like scrapbooking, organizing games, and going on field trips to exciting places like the South Bend Chocolate Company.

Laney's journey is fueled by the unwavering support of her family, friends, and mentors like Christine and Carol. She expresses gratitude for the kindness and inclusivity of her workplace, where everyone knows her by name and respects her for who she is. She appreciates what she has learned in her employment journey and hopes she can continue to have opportunities to apply it in the future.

Navigating Challenges

Previously, Laney worked at a restaurant and Goodwill, but found them less suitable due to excessive movement. Now, she relishes the opportunity to work in the community and continue her role as a Meals on Wheels volunteer, which is part of the Day Services activities she enjoys.

As Laney has progressed through her community employment, she has discovered what she enjoys and the things she hasn't enjoyed so much. Laney benefited from these experiences in many ways. Through these employment opportunities, she developed the confidence to advocate and pursue her work-related goals.

Laney also loves giving back to her community. She spends a portion of her fall working with a local non-profit to arrange their pumpkins and fall décor. She

takes pride in her work and gaining additional skills to meet the demands of her work tasks.

Laney relies on others to assist her in getting to work. Her parents have been incredibly supportive, ensuring she always arrives at work on time. This allows her to maintain a consistent work schedule and focus on her job responsibilities.

Ingredients for Success

- **Option of Self Direction:** Laney absorbed the work tasks in three distinct community work opportunities and decided for herself what was important to keep and what she would like to swap out. Because of this, Laney has created a list of goals she would like to work toward. Laney's ability to decide not only her work experiences but also her social and civic experiences has created a more robust understanding of what work is and how her work preferences can be applied.
- **Capturing Gratitude:** Laney's job coach, family, staff, and co-workers have worked hard to ensure Laney has the opportunities she seeks and the support she needs to find success. These relationships are important for her stability and work journey. Arguably more important is her recognition of the value in these experiences, which showcase that Laney feels she is on the right path toward her ultimate employment goals.
- **Family Supports:** Laney's parents leveraged their social network to assist Laney in finding a fulfilling and rewarding job within the community. Her father ensures she has a reliable means of transportation to and from work, as she can't travel independently. Laney also speaks of her brother and his dog, which reflects a solid sibling relationship between the two. The family's concerted and intentional planning ensures Laney's ongoing access to necessary workplace support sufficient to maintain employment.

- **Quality Does Not Equal Quantity:**

Laney's desire to work did not stop her from finding a job that fits her interests and capabilities. Laney's limited working hours are not a definition of her ability to work. Working a traditional full or part-time schedule is not always the best path for everyone, and a quality position does not mean a specific quantity of hours. Working is important to many people's sense of self, regardless of the hours dedicated to employment.

Laney's determination to contribute did not deter her from discovering a job that aligned with both her passions and abilities. The constraints on Laney's hours do not define her capacity to work. A conventional full-time or part-time schedule may not suit everyone, and a fulfilling position transcends mere hours. For many, work plays a vital role in their identity, irrespective of the time devoted to

Words of Wisdom

For those considering a transition to competitive employment, Laney's advice is clear: Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone.

She encourages others to explore job opportunities at places like Work One, advocating for job shadowing and emphasizing the importance of responsibility, appropriate attire, and respectful behavior in the workplace. Her wisdom comes from lived experience, a testament to her growth and empowerment on this remarkable journey.



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