

Pathways to Competitive Integrated Employment

Terry's Story



Meet Terry, who loves stock cars, traveling for the Special Olympics, and working at Pizza Hut, a job he's held for four years. Sometimes it isn't easy for people to understand Terry, but he loves to talk and is upbeat about much in his life, especially his job.

Background

After high school, some years ago, Terry began working at a sheltered workshop, mainly sorting bolts and screws. He liked working there, although he says it would get hot in the summer. Before the Covid pandemic, Terry worked with Vocational Rehabilitation and his job coaches to move from the sheltered workshop to community employment. Pizza Hut is where he found a job he liked, people he loves working with, and success.

Finding Purpose on the Job

Terry loves to talk about his bosses and coworkers at Pizza Hut. He cleans the tables in the kitchen, stocks the supply shelves, does the dishes, and takes out the garbage. Terry says one of his bosses has recently taught him how to cut the pizzas. Terry also likes to talk about all the different types of food they make at Pizza Hut, like brownies, cookies, the

different pizzas, wings, and breadsticks. His coworkers and boss keep him laughing all the time he is working. Terry also talked about working at night, and how he enjoys working in the evenings.

Navigating Challenges

Terry explains how staff at the sheltered workshop and at VR worked with him to get his job at Pizza Hut, mentioning the employment specialist who helped him find and apply for his job and the job coaches who've assisted him along the way.

Terry said that staff members where he lives either help him walk to Pizza Hut, since he's not able to walk there alone, or give him a ride to and from his job. He adds that sometimes he and his coworkers get coffee. Although there have been challenges for Terry (he mentioned having some of his personal items stolen once, for example), Terry focuses on the positives and talks mostly about what he likes, loves, and how well his job has gone.

Ingredients for Success

- **The Presumption of Competence:** Although he likes to talk to people and is very friendly, it can be difficult to understand Terry when he talks. Unfortunately, the capability of

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

people with disabilities is often judged by their verbal skills. Terry's success at Pizza Hut is a great example of how when support providers, employers, and coworkers presume competence (presume that the person with a disability can learn and work a job successfully), the person with a disability can display their job skills and abilities.

- **Natural Supports:** Terry gives credit to his boss and coworkers. They helped him learn his job, they sometimes help him with his job now, and they also help him learn new skills. Terry likes sharing about how much fun he and his colleagues have together, and how he enjoys working at Pizza Hut and wants to stay there. All

these comments illustrate how important it can be to build and use natural supports on the job. All workers need and receive natural support. Employees with disabilities benefit from these same supports.

- **Other Supports:** Vocational Rehabilitation and Terry's job coaches have also been key to helping him be successful at Pizza Hut. Through the years, his job coaches have increased supports as he has needed them, and they've also faded those supports when Terry can work more independently. Staff from where Terry lives provide transportation, help him get ready, get to work on time, keep track of his schedule, and assist with Terry's personal needs.

Words of Wisdom

Terry's story is an example of how success at a job can potentially increase success elsewhere and throughout life. Employment can bring fulfillment, contentment, and experience with success, which can impact all parts of a person's life.

When asked what he would tell a friend about getting a job in the community, Terry spoke about a specific friend he has who seems afraid to get a job. His advice: "You need a job, man!" He also mentioned that he would tell his friends without jobs to look up jobs online and to work with job coaches.



With funding from the **Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services**