

Pathways to Competitive Integrated Employment

Kevin's Story

Meet Kevin, a passionate sports fan. When his mother decided to relocate to Florida, Kevin made the bold decision to stay behind and carve out his own path. With his family's encouragement and support from Vocational Rehabilitation and the Cardinal Agency, Kevin achieved emancipation and set his sights on building a stable, independent life through meaningful employment.

Background

Kevin's path to competitive integrated employment began with exploring roles that matched his strengths and interests. Guided by the Cardinal Agency, he found a job in a supported employment group at an orthopedic company. His role involves breaking down, sorting, and recycling boxes, work that suits his love for physical tasks and structured activities. "I like picking up heavy things; it's like muscle work," Kevin says, beaming with pride. When asked about his preferences, Kevin is quick to share he prefers community-based employment because he can "go shopping and buy stuff."



Finding Purpose on the Job

Kevin's journey highlights the importance of a strong support system. His cousin Sam, who works at the same company, played a crucial role in helping Kevin adapt to his new workplace. Kevin draws comfort and a sense of belonging when he talks about Sam, "He has a wife and kids. He's like a brother". Sam took the initiative to make Kevin feel included, personally introducing him to everyone and cultivating a comfortable work environment. "People are nice there," Kevin says, emphasizing how much he values the positive atmosphere. Kevin also says, "It's good. It's an easy job. People know you."

Dedicated staff members like Connie and Shannon have also been instrumental in Kevin's success. They provide essential training and guidance, helping him master tasks like sorting materials and navigating

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workplace expectations. Transportation support and regular check-ins ensure that Kevin has everything he needs to stay on track.

Navigating Challenges

The transition wasn't without its hurdles. An initial experience at a busier, high-pressure workplace left Kevin feeling overwhelmed. With the help of his family and job coach, he moved to a quieter and more focused environment where he could excel. This change allowed him to rebuild his confidence and approach work with renewed enthusiasm.

Ingredients for Success

- **Identifying Strengths:** Kevin takes immense pride in the efficiency and focus he brings to his work. He enthusiastically describes his tasks, "I tear it off, fold it back, throw the trash, wrap it up again." He thrives on the physical demands of his job, adding, "I do it fast... I pick up one box, two boxes, then go get

more." This alignment between his abilities and his work responsibilities has been a key factor in his success.

- **Pursuing Personal Goals:** Choosing independence, Kevin stayed behind when his mother moved. He's focused on self-improvement, pursuing his GED and boosting reading skills. Beyond work, he prioritizes financial independence, diligently earning and saving. Kevin's determined to build his own future, demonstrating a strong drive for personal and economic growth.
- **Other Supports:** Kevin thrived with a strong support system. His cousin Sam eased his workplace transition, while his colleagues Connie and Shannon provided key training. After a stressful start at another company, family and a job coach helped Kevin find a calmer environment. This tailored setting allowed him to master tasks and succeed.

Words of Wisdom

Kevin's determination and the unwavering support of his family and team have set him on a path to continued growth and success. With plans to further his education, explore new opportunities, and maintain financial stability, Kevin is building a future that reflects his aspirations and independence.

Kevin's goals extend beyond his current job. He's progressing toward his GED, improving his reading and acquiring new skills. Financial independence is also a priority for Kevin, who emphasizes the importance of earning and saving money responsibly.

For others navigating the path to community employment, Kevin's advice is simple: "Find a support system and a job you enjoy. Don't be afraid to ask for help." He encourages others to focus on their strengths and seek out rewarding tasks.



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