

Pathways to Competitive Integrated Employment

Matt's Story

Meet Matt, a determined 41-year-old, who is steadily accomplishing his personal and work goals. He discovered purpose in a new role, a stark contrast to his previous experience in a sheltered workshop.

Matt shares an apartment with a roommate and gets transportation support from Res Care. Every day, he pours his energy into meaningful work and looks for ways to give back to the community he loves.

Background

Matt's career began in a sheltered workshop, where he worked diligently in the "clean room," assembling and packaging baby bottles. His precision and work ethic did not go unnoticed. Recognizing his potential, his supervisors encouraged him to apply for a more prominent role. Today, Matt thrives as a team member at Arc Industries.

In his current role, Matt ensures quality control in the clean room, overseeing manufacturing processes to ensure products are correctly assembled, labeled,



and safely packaged for shipment. Beyond technical tasks, Matt has embraced leadership responsibilities. As an "assistant to the lead," he supports associates by answering questions, coordinating tasks, and fostering a collaborative atmosphere. His work includes using specialized computer systems like "Connect 2.0" to maintain accurate progress notes, showing his ability to adapt and grow in complexity.

Finding Purpose at Arc Industries

Matt's ultimate goal is rooted in his passion for people: "I really do enjoy helping people out," he shares. "I want to give back to my fellow workers." This ethos guided his transition to his current role supporting individuals with disabilities in achieving their goals and navigating challenges.

He believes in creating a workplace culture built on trust and understanding. "It's important to have a

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supervisor who listens and teaches in a way that works for you," he says. Trust is a recurring theme in his journey, reflecting both his personal values and his vision for a supportive work environment.

Navigating Challenges

The transition from sheltered to community-based employment was not without challenges. Matt acknowledges the shift in expectations and environment: "You're going to be around people you don't know or trust, with different expectations." Yet, he views these changes as opportunities for growth. His advice to others? "Chase your dreams, do what you love, and if you don't like your job, you can always find another one."

Transportation is often a barrier for individuals transitioning to community jobs, Matt navigated this successfully. He credits Res Care for providing

reliable support, and he empathizes with peers who face difficulties in this area.

Ingredients for Success

- **Self-empowerment and personal growth:** Matt's nearly 20-year journey reflects his resilience and capacity to grow. Starting with basic tasks, he advanced step by step, earning respect and taking on new responsibilities. His story is not just about personal success but also about empowering others to thrive.
- **Selflessness and motivation:** For Matt, work is more than a paycheck. It's a platform to make a difference. "I want to help people live normal lives, break barriers, and achieve their dreams," he says. In his role at work, he has opportunities to do just that, one step at a time.

Words of Wisdom

Matt understands the concerns of parents hesitant to see their adult children transition to community jobs. He emphasizes the importance of involving families in the transition process through open discussions about the pros and cons. "Parents need to know their children are safe, supported, and doing well," he says.

For those in sheltered workshops contemplating community employment, Matt's message is clear: "Don't be afraid. Live your best life. The supports you need can follow you to a community job."



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