

Pathways to Competitive Integrated Employment

Roy's Story

Meet Roy. He has a passion for cooking and restaurants. He's tried different jobs throughout the years, at a sheltered workshop, Goodwill, Tractor Supply, and at a few restaurants. Roy admits that he hasn't always liked working at many of the places he has tried—except the restaurants.

When a job opened at a nearby McDonald's, he and his Vocational Rehabilitation counselor jumped at the opportunity. Roy's VR counselor helped him complete the online application, and after an interview, he was hired. Roy has been very excited about being employed at McDonald's since getting his job (although he did say his nutritionist is not quite as excited, since Roy likes the food at McDonald's a lot too—and gets a free meal each day he works).



Background

Roy is 59 years old and says he works 3-4 hours, about three days a week. Currently, he makes around \$11 an hour. He said that he hopes to work more hours and earn more in the future. Roy said that learning his job has not been too hard, although he and his job coach did talk about a few issues. One of those is that Roy doesn't like using his walker in the kitchen area. The restaurant says he can, but he only likes to use it in the staff break room and out in the dining area. Roy insists he can do his job dishwashing and working the fryer without having the walker in the kitchen. Roy says that he likes what he is doing currently, but he does hope to learn how to make sandwiches in the future.

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

Finding Purpose at McDonald's

When asked what he enjoys the most about his job, Roy says that he likes earning money and working in the community with other people coming and going. He says that after all the jobs he tried, he realized that he likes working in restaurants the most.

Roy really likes his job coach, saying "I bet she's going to keep me forever." He also says he likes his coworkers and manager, who supports him a lot. Roy and his coworkers like to joke around in the kitchen. He says he does what his boss wants him to do, and he doesn't get into trouble.

After asking Roy some questions about why he likes working in restaurants, he told us that deep down, he'd like to go to cooking school and learn how to cook (more than flipping burgers). He says he really likes cooking shows on television and looks forward to working and learning more about professional cooking. When asked about what he preferred, working in the community or staying in the sheltered workshop, Roy said, "I like McDonald's better. You are out in the public and I get to see regular people come in every day."

Navigating Challenges

The only challenge Roy mentioned is that he doesn't like to use his walker in the kitchen, even though his employer is fine with him doing so. His VR counselor and job coach have been considering getting him a different walker with a basket on it that he can use to carry things. It can be awkward if Roy is carrying a large tray to the dishwasher and trying to use his walker. So, if they can figure out a way he can use his walker to hold items, it would be less awkward.

Beyond this challenge, Roy discussed that transportation could be a barrier, but he has learned how to use paratransit to get to and from work, and they have set up an emergency plan so he has a cell phone and the phone numbers of whom he should call if paratransit can't come and get him.

Ingredients for Success

- **Job Coaching:** Without support from his job coach, Roy acknowledges that he wouldn't have been able to get the job at McDonald's. Not only has his job coach helped him learn the job and navigate supports while on the job, he's also helped him figure out how to get to work.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation:** Roy says VR has been vital to his current success. Working through the Discovery process with his VR counselor for about a year helped Roy try out different types of jobs, which helped him know that he wanted to continue working in food service. His VR counselor helped set up job coaching, natural supports on the job, his uniform, and visit with a benefits counselor to help him learn more about his benefits and how he can work and maintain them.
- **Local Business Connections:** Both Roy's VR counselor and job coach have obtained and maintained relationships with local businesses and managers, and they work to develop ties to new businesses as well. This especially helps, since the city where Roy lives is in a somewhat rural areas and moderately sized. Building and maintaining relationships helped Roy get and keep the current job he has and can help him in the future if he wants to change jobs.
- **Transportation:** Roy's job coach helped him learn how to use paratransit within their local community. She also worked some with the staff where Roy lives, as they sometimes assist in Roy's transportation to and from work. His job coach also set up plans in case something falls through. He has a cell phone with the numbers of people including his job coach and home staff, programmed into it. They have created a system so Roy knows who to contact if his typical transportation falls through.

Words of Wisdom

“If it wasn’t for VR, I wouldn’t have a job. Veronica at the house signed me up for VR. Paula and Michelle (job coaches) helped me with Discovery and then job coaching. We practiced interviewing, we practiced answering interview questions. We applied at other places.”

When asked what advice he would give someone who wanted to move from sheltered work to work in the community, Roy said, “Don’t give up. Because if you have to wait as long as I have, it is well worth it. I had to wait one year to get a job when I started Discovery. Paula would take applications and we would fill them out at the office.”

In conclusion, Roy adds, “They [the person who wants to be employed in the community] should work their best and find the best people to work with them. I would tell them to go to VR.”



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