

ACHIEVEMENTS

A quarterly newsletter published by Creative Achievements to support our mission: Creating Solutions For Persons With Employment Challenges.



July, 2013

Cotton Patch - A Wonderful Partnership

Most of us have experienced Cotton Patch Restaurants' "down-home" cooking! Well, Creative Achievements can't say enough good things about Cotton Patch, in addition to that famous chicken fried steak.

About a year ago, we were approached by Melinda Mason, of Southlake High School, to continue working with a young lady, and DARS, our funder, to provide job coaching after school was out for the summer at a Cotton Patch Restaurant.

We remembered the great staff and team support, which is ideal for someone with an employment challenge. Several months later, that job carving experience helped pave the way for a job placement at the Cotton Patch in Fort Worth.



It has been our pleasure to work with Cody, the General Manager, and Justin, the Food Services Manager. As it turns out, Justin has been a pediatric nurse, and has the highly unique combination of disability awareness, initiative, energy, creativity, and "can do" attitude that we wish we could clone. Enter Paige, an intriguing and delightful young lady that was looking for her first job in the community. She and her mother had already been through another employment group that deemed Paige unemployable.

With Cotton Patch's support, C.A., staff worked to design a job that fit Paige's unique skill set and circumstances.

Everybody involved had to earn success. At one point we expected that Cody would give up on Paige, but he did not. We had to dig deep, and go back to some of Paige's supports to try new techniques. We redesigned aspects of her job. In her own time, everything clicked, and Paige now gets to work, and gets her duties done

with little prompting. She has another family.

Armed with this success, C.A. again approached a Cotton Patch restaurant in Mansfield. Another one of our consumers, Alex, is on board and doing a fine job. For her, it was just about getting a chance to prove herself. She genuinely cares for everyone that she meets! We've had an easy transition here, and have really appreciated working with Joel, the

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Alex continues to increase hours and duties thanks to Joel's support and guidance

Manager. Had it not been for Paige's success, Joel might have been more reluctant. Success breeds duplication!

So, readers.....if you haven't eaten at a Cotton Patch Restaurant, its past time. Bring your support to this chain of restaurants that is actively supporting persons with disabilities, one creative job at a time in the Fort Worth, Texas area.



Justin and Paige take a break for a picture

Ability Awareness

(Thanks to Board Member, Javier for providing this insightful article)

Have you ever gotten the occasional stare at the grocery store from curious folks? Has a random person brazenly asked you how you do...everything... (dress yourself, drive to doctors appointments and brush your teeth?) This has happened to me on several occasions and continues to happen on a daily basis from ordinary people who simply cannot imagine themselves in my shoes. This is something that happens all too often with people who have disabilities and I want to explore this occurrence and try to shed some light.

In college I was asked by one of my Psychology professors to speak to a senior seminar class on my experiences growing up; learning how to dress myself, ride a bike and show (literally) how I tie my shoes and even brush my teeth. As much I enjoyed the awkward attention of showing people how to do basic things I was a little shocked when I saw people who had hands, clinching their fists like mine and try to imitate me brushing teeth and or tie their shoes. (For those who don't know me I don't have fingers but at first glance appear to have fists)

I wasn't offended at all but I did have to point out that their attempts to walk in my shoes was well appreciated but quite frankly pointless. For once, even though I would have wanted people to relate to me I came to the realization that they could not "walk in my shoes." I didn't learn to tie my shoes overnight and sometimes I would, by accident, put shirts on backwards until I finally adjusted to a way that worked for me. Like many in the disability community I went through years of physical therapy, failed attempts, frustration, discouragement but ultimately hope, determination and finally success! For me this was a turning point on how I addressed people when I get stares, comments or questions because now I wasn't wanting people to place themselves in my shoes. I actually put myself in their shoes. Often people can't fathom how amazing the human body is when it has to adjust or how remarkable it is when adapting to its environment. Good examples here are people who live in extreme weather conditions, returning war veterans who undergo amputation, etc. The honest truth is that if you don't know how to do something, the only human response is to figure out a way to do it. Is it amazing? Absolutely. But, more importantly its necessary and sometimes I take that for granted. Sometimes we all may take that for granted too. Simply put, we are awesome!

TICKET TO WORK

The Ticket To Work Program has been around a few years. A couple of years ago, our staff filled out the mounds of paperwork to begin the process for approval. Most of you know that there are millions of people that receive SSI and SSDI. The goal for TTY is to pay employment providers like Creative Achievements to help eligible individuals get off of Social Security benefits

Without a doubt, this program is not for everyone. There are many folks out there who are on disability, and need to stay on disability. But there are people that, with the right supports, can and do get jobs, and eventually get off of their benefits. Creative Achievements Staff love to make this happen. We're not a big funder, like our state vocational program, the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services. But sometimes we're the right fit for their situation.

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Jasmyne and her Texas Wesleyan Crew

Jasmyne is a strikingly beautiful young lady that is finding her way, after graduating from high school.

When she was a little girl, Jasmyne remembers having seizures. Her parents were very concerned, and finally, they met with staff at Cook Children's Hospital, and took the risk of brain surgery.

Fortunately, the surgery stopped the seizures, but it presented a new challenge. Jasmyne had some short term memory loss. She had to re-learn many things over, which is typical, but still a frustrating and long process.

Jasmyne had tried a few employment options with DARS, one of our funders, without success.

She was sitting home each day with nothing to do, while her brothers went to school, and her parents went to work.

Creative Achievements staff began working with Jasmyne, and learned that her favorite place to work in her high school vocational program was a local hospital's cafeteria. We learned firsthand that Jasmyne likes to make sweets, and please her family.

We have been very fortunate to forge a relationship with Will Timmerman, the Food Services



Jasmyne and her Manager, Will Timmerman

Manager of the Texas Wesleyan Cafeteria. He is not your typical manager. He is approachable, very supportive of the students, and always a visible person on the cafeteria floor, even before double knee surgery!

Will was interested in giving Jasmyne a shot, based on what he had learned about her. Creative Achievements provided support, along with a wonderful staff, including Tamika in human resources, and Anna on the floor, who has served many years and is known for taking employees under her wing.

Like most things, this has been an evolving process. We had to learn which duties Jasmyne liked to do best, and she wanted to feel like she belonged. Each month, she made progress in so many ways.

These days, Jasmyne can work a number of areas, and she has also branched out into helping bake goodies and desserts, one of her passions. Mr. Timmerman has made it a point to continue to challenge Jasmyne and she has responded.

In the beginning, one of Jasmyne's conditions for employment was having a job on the bus line or making sure a relative could bring her. These days, Jasmyne has made enough money to buy her own car, and finish up her driver's training. She now drives herself to work and back.

We celebrate Mr. Timmerman and his staff's willingness to work with us. He has also been open to being a site for other clients' job samples, and we can't thank him enough.



Jasmyne, under the Ram Mascot

Who We Are

Creative Achievements is a private, 501-C3 non-profit organization dedicated to community employment for persons with a variety of disabilities. Together, we have placed hundreds of persons in individualized job settings ranging from 5-40 hours, based on the needs of our job seekers and employers. We are passionate, skilled, and serious about employment. We have a small Board of Directors, and operate with minimal administrative costs.

Goals for this newsletter:

- To applaud organizations that have hired our customers;
- To highlight some of the great work that our customers are doing;

- To **give tips** to job seekers that are able to get their own job;
- To educate employers about the benefits of thinking “outside the box” when it comes to non-traditional jobs, and job “carving” for our customers that have a tough time getting their own job;
- To **educate** persons about a specific disability in each newsletter;
- To report on current events in the Metroplex that relate to employment for persons with disabilities.
- To let businesses know that even if they are not in a position to hire a client, they could always help us by **being on our list of places our clients can volunteer or “job sample”**. (You would be getting some

free labor with supervision, and in turn, we get a better idea of how our client performs in a community environment.” Contact us at (817)238-7802 for more details.

- To remind our former customers and other friends of Creative Achievements to **always be on the lookout for job openings!! You are our eyes and ears. If you give us a job lead that results in employment for one of our customers, we will pay you a finder's fee.**



Ticket To Work, Continued

In 2013, our clients have to make a minimum of \$750 a month, in order that we are paid for the first time. That can mean long months of preparation, training, and waiting. Lots of employment providers can't wait that long for reimbursement. Not to mention the fact that all of our billing across the nation goes to one place that processes it. Wow! No wonder payments can be slow. Also, some clients drop out, for a variety of reasons. That hurts. It has happened to every one of our staff, and we question (for a few minutes at least) why we have tried this in the first place. Even still, we're figuring this out. Our screening of potential clients continues to improve. We're finding out better ways of doing things.

One of our success stories is James. He has been in the criminal justice system, serving time for something that he has always and still believes was unfair. Like most people in this predicament, he could have given up. He didn't. He stuck it out. His wife and kids have continued to support him through this time period. James came to us and wanted to work. There were more obstacles than just the background. He walks with a limp due to cerebral palsy, and so sometimes employers do not think that he is strong enough to do a blue collar job, especially with his small frame. But, James has perseverance—and, given the chance, has outworked those around him. He didn't get the first job he interviewed for, and didn't get the second one after a try-out. But he finally got a job, and he's made good on it. James has worked over a year, and has never looked back. He stopped getting benefits immediately, and he happy to say that he is a tax paying, contributor to society. Some weeks, James has worked as many as 60 hours. No matter. He accepts the work readily. He actively trains others on the job. There are always issues with any job, but James wanted to be in the real world, caring for his wife and children, paying taxes, and restoring his name. We salute James, and he is an example to people that need a second chance. He got one, and he's making good on it.