



Employment
"How it Happened for Me"

An Interview with Larry and Cheryl
Bethlehem, PA

Larry started his path to a work career at VIA of Lehigh Valley, Inc. in a sheltered workshop setting and is now working in the community at a job he enjoys. Cheryl is an Employment Coordinator at VIA of Lehigh Valley, Inc. and is part of Larry's support team. In his own words Larry shared how the transition to community employment happened for him.

Q: Where are you employed and how long have you worked at this job?

R: I work at Arby's. The day before New Year's Day I went to an interview at Arby's and talked to a lady named Mary Ann. I had to go back another time and she said, "do you want the job?" When I said yes I had to fill out some papers. Cheryl added that before Larry could start to work at Arby's, his transportation with Metro Plus had to be worked out which took about a week or two.

Q: What job experiences did you have prior to working at Arby's?

R: I worked at Ollie's Bargain Outlet Store for 18 months then I got laid off. I had lots of friends there, even the boss. I mopped the hallways, bathroom, lounge, and the whole

store. Before I worked at Ollie's I worked at VIA workshop maybe two years. "I don't want to go back." Larry operated the automatic tape machine, the heat tunnel, did piece work and walked the line packaging crayons and markers. Larry does enjoy visiting VIA on occasion Cheryl said to see some of his friends.

Q: How did your agency match Larry's skills to community employment opportunities?

R: We start with a community-based assessment. We have each person work individually with a job developer. The job developer completes an assessment and discovers the individual's likes, dislikes and passions. From the assessment we also find out what type of work the individual would like. Once we discover the capabilities and interests of the individual we go into the job development phase and look for a match with employment in the community. For Larry, his skills and interests matched perfectly with the job at Ollie's and now his current place of employment at Arby's.

Q: What are your job responsibilities and work hours at Arby's?

R: I take the tables and chairs down and brush them off and I sweep the floors. I have to make sure the bathroom is clean before the customers start to come in to order food. I work from 8:00 until 11:00 and I get off on weekends. "I like it so far".

Q: Did someone help you to find your job?

R: Amy helped me get my job (Amy is Larry's job coach). She went on my interview, drove me there and helped me with the questions. Amy did some tests with me to find out what I was good at. Mary Ann helps me on my job at Arby's. She's my boss at Arby's. She is good about helping me. Cheryl explained that Amy would help Larry until he learns how to do his job on his own, and then she will slowly phase out when he feels comfortable with his responsibilities.

At some point Larry will depend on his natural supports at Arby's. It's important to know that Larry lives with his sister and she has been extremely helpful in supporting Larry and worked closely with Amy, especially working out the Metro Plus transportation so he can get back and forth to work.

Q: What is the most difficult part of your job?

R: Finishing my job while I'm at work, sometimes I need some reminding. I get to work before Mary Ann and have to wait outside the door and it's cold. The bus driver was in a hurry because he had to get some people to a different location. Cheryl explained that taking the bus can be a challenge because sometimes it may be running a little early or a little late. Getting to work early has only happened once or twice for Larry.

Q: What is the best part of your job?

R: My paycheck is one good part of my job and I like the people I work with. In August I get one-week vacation. Cheryl said that each year Larry goes on a camping retreat in the mountains. Larry is quick to add that he goes camping with his friends. "There is a special girl that I get to see while I'm at camp. We watch movies, go swimming and see each other when we eat."

Q: Has your job at Arby's changed your life in any way?

R: Arby's is closer to home than Ollie's and I like that. The boss is nice and keeps me busy. I like to get out of the house. This is my independent time. I would like to stop by Ollie's sometime and see my old friends I use to work with. I worked with Pat and she told me to stop back sometime and visit everyone.

Q: What changes have you seen in Larry since he started working at Arby's?

R: Larry is making new friends with co-workers and overall he is happier when staying busy and earning an income. He likes to earn an income because he buys things for himself. He recently bought a lounging chair, a telephone with his own private line, DVD's and posters.

Q: What would you tell your friends Larry if they would like to have a job in the community?

R: Go get a job. Talk to Amy or tell somebody where you work or live that you want a job. I'm happy now.

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