



MISSION MOMENTS

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The art of perseverance

Many of us take our jobs for granted, as if employment is a guaranteed part of life. For 1 in 5 Americans, the estimated number of people with disabilities, just getting the same chance to pursue employment as those without disabilities can be a challenge. External factors like the stigma around disability, incorrect assumptions about ability, and systems that are inaccessible—from transportation to online applications—often stand in the way of successful employment for individuals with disabilities.

Disability is the largest minority group in the U.S. and the only minority that anyone could join at any time. In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, we wanted to share the story of Ron, who has overcome numerous obstacles on his path to employment.

Ron is the second of three children in his family. During his childhood, he moved from North Carolina, to Kentucky, and finally ended up in Indiana. As an individual who is deaf, he attended the Kentucky School for the Deaf for most of his education and graduated from high school after moving to Greenfield, IN halfway through his senior year.

Ron then went on to study Data Processing at the National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID). After 2 years, he began having problems with his vision, which he later learned was caused by a hereditary condition. He took a leave of absence from NTID and ended up at the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), where he completed a 9-month deaf-blind rehabilitation program. Returning to NTID was not an option, so Ron worked as a teacher's aide and residential staff at HKNC for five years.

Ready to pursue a new direction, Ron moved back home to Indiana and was hired as a stocker at a large retailer, where he worked for 20 years. During this time, he was able to purchase his own home and was proud of his work and independence. Unfortunately, changes within the company and changes to Ron's job led to his dismissal from this job. For four years, he was unable to find employment. Then, earlier this year, he decided it was time to get serious about his job search. Vocational Rehabilitation matched him to Tangram, which specializes in providing employment services for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

While working with his employment consultant, Bobbie, Ron kicked his search into high gear—"He did a superb job of looking for employment through online resources," said Bobbie. Ron found a possible job at FedEx Express and was hired in August. "He has been happy working there. His supervisor reported that he is doing his job well and is very pleasant to work with!" Though Ron was faced with unexpected challenges in his professional life, he has never given up his search for fulfilling employment. His perseverance and attitude are the keys to his success. Great work, Ron!



Ron working as a package handler at FedEx Express

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