

IOWA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

A newsletter brought to you by the State Rehabilitation Council and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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Assistive Technology and Employment Partners Lead to Employment Success

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) supports Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) as respected and valued partners in providing employment services to IVRS job candidates. IVRS also collaborates with the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME) Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) Amerigroup and Iowa Total Care to ensure the placement of long-term employment support for those in need. IVRS, MCOs and CRP staff work together to jointly coordinate services that will assist a job candidate in reaching a successful employment outcome.

IVRS has also been working diligently to support limited capacity issues that CRPs may experience from time to time by supporting new CRPs and independent providers to get their credentials and certification to be able to provide quality services with IVRS and the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise recipients. IVRS also recognizes the virtual services that can support some individuals, especially during the pandemic. While many CRPs are reducing the area of coverage and some closing down their employment program all together, CHOICE Employment Services is a CRP that has expanded from the Northeast part of the state to central Iowa's Ames and Des Moines areas in order to meet the needs of some Job Candidates who live in an area that have no employment support services.



When CHOICE Employment Services received the referral for Kyle, the case manager shared with Carrie Dahlquist, Owner/CEO "Kyle has been in job development for years and has never even had an interview."

"Hearing that made my heart sink and I knew that we needed to assist Kyle with his employment goals." said Dahlquist.

Everyone told Carrie that Kyle was a personable and intelligent young man. He was ambitious, too, with a strong work ethic. Though cerebral palsy means he is unable to walk, drive or even write, Kyle wanted a job. Yet those same people who talked about how bright and likable he was couldn't find any work for him. He and his family began working with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and CHOICE Employment Services in Decorah, about an hour from the family's New Hampton home. CHOICE got him back to the school district he graduated from, where they knew exactly what Kyle was capable of; they wanted to put him in charge of updating the district's new Facebook page. IVRS addressed Kyle's ability to interface with his computer using the Sip and Puff system. Next he began updating the electric sign that flashes reminders about upcoming games, theater productions and "early outs" as traffic passes a main intersection in New Hampton.

His duties kept growing; These days, every morning, he puts out breaking news alerting staff, students and parents the number of Covid 19 cases in the high school, the middle school and the elementary school.

"I love my job," he said. "Covid has made everything so crazy. I like to see job coaches in person but when we're not face-to-face a webcam makes it so easy to see everybody. That works."

Dahlquist added, "I have enjoyed watching Kyle's employment career. I truly feel that all individuals can have a career, and at CHOICE we follow that philosophy. Kyle is a perfect representative of that - he found a job he loves and continues to grow and excel within his profession."

Assistive Technology Keeps Iowa Farm in Production

A custom farmer with significant back impediments and mobility limitations wanted to continue and grow his custom farming business. He did not want a desk job despite his work tolerance and mobility limitations — he wanted to continue to work outdoors. He had trouble being on his feet and sitting for extended periods of time which is another reason an office job wouldn't suit him. Lifting was a major limiting factor when it came to his work tolerance. If he had to lift heavy objects he would be in much more pain throughout the day. After consulting with IVRS staff, it was decided that owning his own custom farming business, and being able to alter his positions and limit the heaving lifting, would work best. He desired to run his own business, with the use of the right assistive technology.

He needed assistance from IVRS Assistive Technology Specialist, Robert Hendrickson with identifying and obtaining the right assistive technology so he could continue to operate his custom farming business. The IVRS Iowa Self Employment Program assisted him with the vision and growth of his custom farming business.

Technology that assisted this small business owner included the following:

Beaver Tail Trailer with permanently mounted **electro hydraulic jacks** (Photo A) so this Job Candidate can raise and lower when hooking up to the tow vehicle with little to no physical exertion.

An all metal **beaver tail loading ramp** (Photo B) that raises and lowers with the push of a button. It is also equipped with raised horizontal traction ridges that will make it safer to walk up and down as well as safer to load and unload equipment.

Two Hitch **Back up Cameras** (Photo C) so the Job Candidate can hook up to and disconnect from agricultural equipment without having to twist his back and head while doing so.



A Word from our Partners

“IVRS has been a tremendous partner for Exceptional Persons, Incorporated (EPI) and the people we serve. At EPI, we support adults with various disabilities in addressing and overcoming barriers between them and employment. We've supported people in finding jobs and starting careers at dozens of different area businesses including childcare centers, retail settings, athletic facilities, amusement centers, restaurants and many more. Many times, the event of gaining employment is a milestone and significant turning point in the lives of people we serve. **Without resources like IVRS, this mission wouldn't be possible.**”

Thank you,

Shannon Henson, Exceptional Persons Inc
Employment Specialist

Visit our website at www.ivrs.iowa.gov