Obtaining and Maintaining Successful Employment: A Young Adult Perspective

Chaz Kellem, Unbreakable Drive
Chris Mielo, Unbreakable Drive
Brooke Yarbrough, Young Adult
Dana Yarbrough, Family Member

Work requires specific job skills, work ethic skills - including presence, social and communication skills, at least basic academic skills, team work, pride in work, ability to solve problems and to ask for help when needed.

Both learned helplessness and independence come from you – (adult supports)

There is true dignity in risk but always work to learn from mistakes.

Self-determination is a learned behavior, based on experiences, attitudes and opportunities

In today’s world, individuals with disabilities are working and contributing in employment settings but the demands are high and the competition for each job is fierce.
Employment Rates June 2013

**Labor Force Participation**
People with disabilities: 20.2%
People without disabilities: 69.7%

**Unemployment Rate**
People with disabilities: 14.2%
People without disabilities: 7.6%

*US Department of Labor*

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We have spent Billions on:

- Raising awareness & advocacy
- Policy initiatives
- Support services

Yet, people with disabilities are still under-represented in the workforce.
What are we doing wrong?

“Successful Employment” is a mutually beneficial relationship. It’s a two-way street.

Not charity.
Help Wanted:

Company looking for individual with Autism, Cerebral Palsy or extensive history of hospitalization. Inappropriate or immature behavior is OK. Supportive coworkers and all needed accommodations provided.

Call for an application.

As we assist young adults in finding a job, we must reframe how we see job seekers and how we approach and partner with employers

Value driven for all involved.
Skills vs. Deficits

- Person-centered planning with a purpose
- Focus on preferences and what a person can do
- Shifts emphasis to adding value
- Targets businesses where job seeker’s unique characteristics and skills will be assets

Self Advocacy and Self Determination
Roles & Responsibilities of an Employer

- The purpose of the ADA is to level the playing field, NOT to provide special privileges or charity.
- Ensure there is NO job discrimination.
- Identify ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE JOB.
- It is NOT the responsibility of the employer to discuss the person’s disability. It is the person’s responsibility to request accommodations to meet the essential functions of the job.

ADA: Leveling the Playing Field (Employment)

**Myth**
Under the ADA, employers must give people with disabilities special privileges, known as accommodations.

**Fact**
Reasonable accommodations are intended to ensure that qualified individuals with disabilities have rights in employment equal—not superior—to those of individuals without disabilities.
Youth and Young Adults Need to…

- Understand your strengths and abilities … then build upon them.
- Understand your challenges and limitations … then develop strategies to minimize or overcome them.
- Be able to speak comfortably and knowingly about “you” as a worker!

Know the Job Description!

- Know the “essential functions” of the job before interviewing
- Request a formal job description in order to
  - Ensure that you have the right match of skills/abilities to perform the job.
  - Prepare for the interview.
  - Inform employer of your concern & interest in performing the job up to their expectations
  - Allow you to investigate whether you will need to request accommodations
Know Your Rights & Responsibilities under ADA!

- Become informed about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Understand that you have both “rights” & “responsibilities” under this law -- as does your employer.
- Use the ADA as a “tool” to facilitate/negotiate accommodations—not as a “weapon” to demand them.
- Always “request” an accommodation or support and “come to the table” with ideas!

Ask for Help!

- Know what resources are available to you should you need them!!!
- Don’t assume that a disability-related, work issue cannot be resolved; brainstorm with others!
- Work cooperatively with your employer and support services to facilitate a solution that is a “win-win” for everyone.
Think Outside the Box!!!

- Know the expectations an employer has for you.
- Build upon your abilities to meet those expectations.
- Be thorough and specific when assessing your need for accommodations.
- Be creative when identifying solutions for overcoming barriers within the workplace.

Families

- In preparing for an employment goal, family input early and throughout the transition process establishes a solid foundation for planning and building skills, critical connections and experiences.
- Learning about work, watching parents and family members work at home, hearing about family member’s work, having responsibilities at home and in the neighborhood can be the foundation for future work experiences.
- In addition to home, neighborhood and community experiences, parents can work with their child’s school to help create opportunities for career development and training.
Foster independence by assigning specific responsibilities in the home. Build responsibility, choice making, a strong work ethic as well as pride in quality and quantity of work.

Build appropriate social and communication skills that will be needed in a work environment

Explore your neighborhood and community for experiences and training opportunities

Discuss future goals and adult realities with your son/daughter

Develop and support a work ethic common to the family culture

Discuss interests, abilities, aptitudes and needs in relation to career goals, personal interests versus avocations

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**So what can a family do?????**

- Personal Stories
  - Chris Mielo
My Employment Journey

Brooke Yarbrough  brookehappytails@aol.com
&
Dana Yarbrough  dyarbrough@vcu.edu

2013

Brooke Cheyenne Yarbrough
2 lbs, 4 oz  1994
Woman Leaders in my Family

Family Vision Statement

We envision a future for Brooke that is full of richness and diversity, one in which she determines her own destiny. She will live a life of her choosing - not one a "system" tells her she has to live.

We offer the support of loving parents and promise her that through life’s many challenges, we will stand by her; there when she needs us.

May Brooke be rich in what truly is of value: relationships, friendships; and a deep sense of belonging.

We believe for a world that will accept Brooke for who she is.

Brooke is healthy - she is not in need of remedy, therapy or cure.
Brooke is not broken - she does not need to be fixed.
Brooke loves chicken, sweet iced tea, dancing, and playing with the dogs she boards for her business. She also likes the computer and listening to music.

Brooke has blue eyes, light brown hair, an infectious smile and giggle, and physical, intellectual and sensory disabilities.

Having disabilities is only a small part of who Brooke is and it is our vision not to change Brooke...but to change the world around her.

John Dana Brooke
IEPs, Job Try Ons & Volunteerism

• Expectation of self-employment since 5th grade
• “Brooke will explore career options that meet her vocational/employment desires”
• Based on interests with music and dogs, Brooke visited, tried on and/or volunteered at:
  – Music Store
  – Choir
  – DJ Company
  – SPCA
  – Great Pyrenees Rescue Program
  – PetSmart

My Love of Dogs Came From...

Tatonka 1993 - 2011
Supported Decision-Making

General Durable Power of Attorney

1. Brandon Coleman, Radiology, resides at 123 Oakline Terrace, Yorkville, NY 10021, and his name is Brandon Coleman. Brandon was appointed as his attorney in fact on June 9, 2016, and is 18 years of age. Brandon is not mentally capable of managing his own affairs due to medical condition.

2. The purpose of this Durable Power of Attorney is to appoint Brandon Coleman as my attorney in fact to act upon my behalf in the following matters:

- Financial Matters
  1. To act in lieu of, place, and deal, taking educational decisions on my behalf.
  2. To receive, accept, and instruct in the management

- Medical Matters
  1. To act in lieu of, place, and deal, taking medical decisions on my behalf.

June 2012
Me
My name is Brooke.
I live in Virginia with my mom and dad.
I go to Varina High School.
I want to own a doggie day care when I graduate high school.

My strengths and talents
I can occupy myself for long periods of time
I pay attention
I am physically strong

Words that describe me best
Always cheerful
Inquisitive
Funny
Cute

What you can do to help me
Pour drinks in my cup
Put food on a fork for me
Help me to the bathroom, get dressed
Help me at school "talk" to classmates
Help me understand and do activities
Push my wheelchair
Give me clear and simple one step directions
Hold things close to me so I can see them

My favorite things
My favorite foods are chicken nuggets, potatoes and peanut butter crackers - and sweet ice tea
I like riding in the car with the window open blowing my hair
I love the sound of shaking a bottle of water
I like listening to music (pop, rock and rap)
I love going to Florida to visit my grandparents

An Ideal Day
A big breakfast with OJ
Going to school
Quiet time throughout the day
Eating every couple of hours
Lots to drink
Sitting with friends in class or lunch
Chillin’ in my room
Playing or shopping with my mom and dad

My fears and worries / Things I don’t like
Sudden noises
When I don’t know what’s going to happen next
Angry, loud voices
Being ignored
Bright sun or lights in my eyes
Not having my dog (she died)

My Worst Possible Day
Sitting at home all day with nothing to do
Not getting enough to eat or drink
Being ignored - especially when I use my body to "talk"
Having surgery

What you can do to help me
Pour drinks in my cup
Put food on a fork for me
Help me to the bathroom, get dressed
Help me at school "talk" to classmates
Help me understand and do activities
Push my wheelchair
Give me clear and simple one step directions
Hold things close to me so I can see them

Your best help
Always cheer me up!

Brooke's Happy Tails
Pet Sitting
Self-Employment Business Plan

1. Conduct Market Research
2. Develop a Budget
3. Obtain Federal Employer Identification #
4. Enroll with State SWAM
5. File for Local Business License
6. Start a Bank Account
7. Draft Boarding Applications/Agreements
8. Perform Public Awareness/Marketing

Boarding Dogs
Boarding Dogs

Who Operates the Business?

• What Brooke does to run Brooke’s Happy Tails Pet Sitting
  – Plays with and grooms dogs
  – Feeds dogs and refills water bowls (with support)
  – Collects payment
  – Buys food, toys and supplies
  – Market business (internet, facebook, etc) (with support)

• What others do for the business
  – Type receipts
  – Walk dogs (some are afraid of wheelchair, some will escape)
  – Maintain budget documents
  – File paperwork with Federal/State/Local agencies
Speed Bumps & Straight Aways

• Change is hard
• Service provider turnover
• Waiting lists
• Inflexible services
• Poor assessments, particularly for AT

• Open minded providers
• Staying on the path
• Networking with employment and transition experts
• Support from other self-advocates and parents

The Future...

• Provide training and technical assistance to other youth wanting to start a pet sitting business
• Explore a 2nd business

Richmond Battlefield Ghost Tours??!!
Personal Stories

• Chaz Kellem

Resources to Assist with Employment:

Accommodations:
Job Accommodations Network: [www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu)
The Family Center on Technology and Disability - [www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info)

Employment, Career Interest and Occupational Information:
National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability: [http://www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)
Career One Stop: [http://www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)
PA Career Zone: [www.pacareerzone.org](http://www.pacareerzone.org)
Self-Employment Resources

– Pennsylvania Workforce Development Career Links for Self-Employment Assistance program
  (www.cwds.state.pa.us/cwdsonline/Admin/ManageUCClaimants/CheckSEAEligibility.aspx)
– Disability. Gov
  (www.disability.gov/home/i_want_to/self-employment)
– Office of Disability Employment Policy
  (www.dol.gov/odep/topics/SelfEmploymentEntrepreneurship.htm)

PA’s Secondary Transition Website

www.secondarytransition.org