



# Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Success Stories

January/February 2026



## ARS SUCCESS STORIES

### Catrina Guthrie

When Catrina was first referred to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, she described feeling helpless and overwhelmed by her circumstances. In truth, she was anything but helpless. Her strength, intelligence, and determination quickly became evident and served as the foundation for her success. With encouragement and guidance from her ARS counselor, Catrina navigated a wide range of challenges, including housing concerns, transportation barriers, and access to restorative services.

Through perseverance and support, she ultimately achieved what she proudly calls her dream job. Reflecting on her experience with ARS, Catrina said, *"I am very thankful for the program, but even more thankful for your knowledge and creativity in providing the most help possible. Encouragement and problem-solving are what allowed me to succeed."* Catrina is currently working with the Water Authority in a paid internship position where her dedication and strong work ethic have led her to become licensed in waste management—one of the most essential roles in maintaining a functioning society. She has earned the highest level of certification available through the internship program. While this certification makes her highly marketable nationwide, she is especially excited about the opportunity to transfer to a location closer to home as she continues building her career.





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### Demarco Dear

Demarco Dear of West Memphis, Arkansas, was recently hired as a Heavy Equipment Operator with Watco Transloading in Memphis, Tennessee. Throughout his life, Demarco has navigated the challenges of a learning disability, which made traditional classroom learning and jobs requiring extensive reading more difficult for him. As Demarco explained, *"My learning disability made classroom learning and jobs with a lot of reading harder for me. I learn best hands-on, so without support, it was difficult to complete required training like OSHA and move forward with heavy equipment training—even though I knew I could do the work."* Demarco learned about Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) through referrals and by researching programs that support individuals with disabilities in pursuing skilled trades, particularly heavy equipment operation. He applied for services in December 2024 while working in a factory, but was seeking greater opportunities for advancement. Demarco shared that earning certification as a heavy equipment operator would allow him to increase both his responsibilities and his earning potential, though he had concerns about his academic ability to complete the program. To ensure appropriate support, a RIDAC assessment was completed and, with Demarco's consent, shared with his training program to provide accommodations. With financial assistance from ARS, Demarco enrolled in the Heavy Equipment Operating Academy in June 2025 and successfully completed the program in August 2025. In October 2025, Demarco began working as a Heavy Equipment Operator. In this role, he operates large machinery—including bulldozers, loaders, backhoes, cranes, and forklifts—to dig, lift, move, grade, and level materials. He is also responsible for equipment maintenance, inspections, and accurate recordkeeping. Confident in his physical abilities, Demarco thrived with the academic support he received and was a pleasure to work with throughout the process. Reflecting on his experience, Demarco shared, *"My experience with ARS has been good. They helped me obtain my OSHA certification and complete my heavy equipment training. The support ARS provided built my confidence and prepared me for steady work in the field."* Since completing the program, Demarco proudly shares his story and continues to refer others to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services for support in achieving their career goals.





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### Katrina Burns

Katrina would like to express her sincere appreciation to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services for its support in covering the cost of her classes. She offers special recognition to her ARS caseworker, whose consistent guidance and attention to detail ensured a smooth and successful process. This dedication and support played a vital role in Katrina's achievement. Katrina applied for services in July 2024. With the assistance of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, she completed the Pharmacy Technician course and successfully earned her license. This accomplishment opened the door for her to enter the workforce and apply her newly acquired skills in a professional setting. Katrina is currently employed as a Pharmacy Technician at Walmart in Magnolia, where she uses her training and education daily. Her success highlights how vocational training combined with supportive services can lead to meaningful employment and long-term career growth. Katrina is truly grateful for the opportunity and support that helped make this achievement possible.





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### Michael Wilson

Michael Wilson's journey is a powerful example of determination, academic excellence, and the impact of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services in helping individuals with disabilities achieve meaningful careers. A student with a physical disability, Michael demonstrated exceptional commitment to his education and professional goals. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Addiction Studies from the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), graduating *magna cum laude*, reflecting his discipline and perseverance. Driven by a passion to help others overcome substance use challenges, Michael continued his education and completed a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling in December 2025 from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). Throughout his studies, he remained focused on building the skills needed to make a lasting difference for individuals facing addiction and other barriers. As part of his graduate training, Michael completed an internship at Changes, where his professionalism and dedication quickly set him apart. Following the internship, he was offered and accepted a full-time position, transitioning seamlessly from student to professional. Looking ahead, Michael plans to pursue professional counselor certification, become a licensed substance abuse counselor, and may also earn his Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential. His success highlights how determination, education, and VR support can empower individuals with disabilities to achieve academic excellence and meaningful employment.





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### Jonas Lott

Jonas began receiving services from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) while still in high school, where he participated in Pre-Employment Transition Services designed to help students explore careers, build workplace skills, and prepare for life after graduation. Through these services, Jonas gained valuable training and support as he worked toward his employment goals. Jonas successfully completed his veterinary assistant training through Petra Allied Health in November, marking an important milestone in his transition from student to workforce-ready professional. Following the completion of his training, he began working with Open Avenues for job placement assistance and is currently on track for employment in a field that aligns with his interests and skills. Reflecting on their experience, Jonas and his mother shared their appreciation for the support they received throughout the process: "Arkansas Rehabilitation Services was amazing to work with as my son completed veterinary assistant classes. Everyone was patient, prompt, and supportive of both of us as we prepared Jonas to enter the workforce. Thank you, ARS, for the work you do for Jonas and others in our community!" Jonas's story highlights the positive impact of early intervention, skill-based training, and dedicated support in helping young people successfully transition into meaningful employment.





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### Markissia Page

Markissia began receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) as a junior in high school through the WOLF program. She continued participating in Pre-ETS during her senior year and proudly graduated in May 2024. Following graduation, Markissia applied for and received financial assistance to attend OCMC–Project SEARCH, taking an important step toward achieving her career goals. During her nine-month internship with OCMC–Project SEARCH, Markissia gained valuable workplace experience and earned several credentials to support her professional development. She obtained her driver's license permit through ACDC, along with additional certificates that strengthened her skills and employability. In May 2025, Markissia graduated from OCMC–Project SEARCH as an employed graduate. Markissia secured employment and continues to work successfully as a food service attendant at the Aramark SAU–Magnolia Cafeteria. She shared that she enjoys interacting with students, staff, and faculty as they come and go throughout the day. This work experience has helped her overcome shyness and build confidence when engaging with others in public settings. Markissia credits her success to the support she received from her ARS counselor, the OCMC–Project SEARCH team, and her family. She expressed deep gratitude for their guidance, encouragement, and belief in her abilities, noting that their support has helped her grow more confident in herself and her career path.

