



Arkansas Division of
Workforce Services
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

ARS
Success Stories
September 2022

Christena Joy



In 2015, Christena Joy came to ARS looking for help furthering her non-traditional education. As a resident of Ozark, the small community helped foster her commitment to others. Because of Joy's love for helping others with disabilities, she developed a goal of becoming a special education teacher. Her previous work at the Franklin County Learning Center helped her establish some experience in this field.

Christena enrolled at Arkansas Tech University Ozark. After completing the program there, she transferred to Arkansas Tech University Russellville and majored in Special Education.

After receiving her bachelor's degree, Joy decided to continue her education and enrolled at Henderson University for a master's program. In 2022, she graduated with a Master of Arts and Teaching in Early Childhood Education/Special Ed with a focus on Birth through Kindergarten.

After completing her educational training, Joy became employed at the Guy-Fenter Educational Service Cooperative as a Special Education Teacher.



Donell Williams

Donell Williams first came to ARS for help starting his career. After being assessed in 2021, it was determined that he was not ready to begin working. He has been diagnosed with autism and several functional limitations that hindered him from being successfully employed.



Williams returned to ARS to join the 2021-2022 class of Project Search which was held at St. Bernard's hospital. Through the program, he was trained to overcome many of his vocational limitations. Project Search gave him a real foundation for a successful career.

After his successfully completion of the program, Donell was hired at St. Bernard's hospital as a dishwasher with full benefits. He says he loves his job and employer.



Fatima Robinson

While a student at Gosnell High School, Fatima Robinson expressed difficulty learning. She began receiving services under an individualized educational plan. In July 2019, she was referred to ARS for Transition Employment Projects services. Under TEP, she got a paid internship at ACTI in Hot Springs. While there, she also received her OSHA and ServSafe certificates.

During her senior year, Fatima began receiving services under the Pre-Employment Transitional Services program through Opportunities for Work Based Learning. Through OWL, she participated in the Virtual Career Competition and received a stipend.

After graduating high school in May of 2020, Williams got a VR counselor through ARS. By August 2020, she enrolled in part-time online training at Trident University. While she eventually wants to own her own business in sales, she decided she wants a job in the meantime.

Her counselor and BER Representative helped her with job placement assistance. She now holds a job as a sales associate at Dollar General. Her work duties include helping customers, zoning the store, and performing cash transactions. Since working, her verbal skills have improved, and her shyness has decreased. She says that she plans to move up to an assistant managerial position in a few months.

Fatima says her experience with ARS was excellent. She thanks ARS for all the services that were provided to her and says she could not have done it without ARS and the help of God. She advises others “Don’t give up. Do your best. Achieve your dreams. Have faith in your own work.”



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Brenda Snyder

After being diagnosed with hearing loss, Brenda Snyder found it difficult to communicate when in the workplace and over the phone. She needed help maintaining her full-time employment as a CNA at Barnes Health Care.

Snyder came to ARS and was quickly connected with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. Together, they began working to determine eligibility and complete the necessary steps to provide aid. Once eligibility was determined, she was connected to a partnered vendor for hearing aid services.

Hearing aids were provided through the vendor and Brenda was successfully able to communicate in the workplace and maintain employment.