



## Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

# ARS Success Stories

## July 2023

### Austin Conner

Former Arkansas Rehabilitation Services client Austin Conner wrote in to sing the praises of ARS, it's programs and his rehab counselor, Terrika Smith.



"I began working with Mrs. Smith in 2019 as a recent high school graduate. Mrs. Smith helped me identify the best career goal and college program needed for me to reach my goal. She always provided me with words of encouragement. Mrs. Smith has never seen an obstacle that I could not overcome. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services has been a great experience for me and has helped me exponentially in starting my career on the right path! I am so fortunate and blessed to have Mrs. Smith to help me further my educational goals and career goals! It has been three years of different challenges and goals that I have had. ARS has helped me achieve my bachelor's and master's degree, both from John Brown University, and Mrs. Smith has been supportive of me going for a doctorate if I want to pursue that in my career! All in all, I would recommend ARS to anyone in need of their services. It has been a large blessing to my life thus far!"



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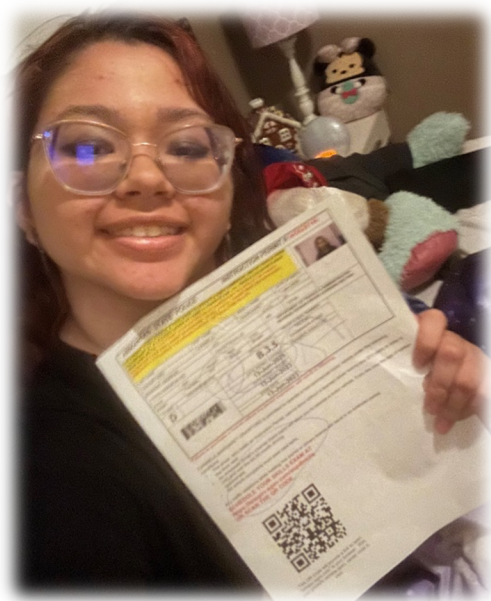
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### **Carmela Crawford**

After passing the written portion of the driver's test, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services client Carmel Crawford wrote her counselor to share her excitement.



"I am so happy to have passed the permit. Mr. Mike McCowan was an amazing instructor and has helped me a lot. I appreciate him helping me review and I passed the oral exam this time with just one take! I am going to try to practice driving with my dad when I am not working and then take the actual driving test. Thank you for referring me to him. You all (ARS) have a great team

to help students like me to succeed in my future. I appreciate it so much. You have no clue how happy I was when they told me I passed! It's going to help me a lot to start in my transition of adulting. I also appreciate you for helping me get through my permit and referred me to the right person like Mr. Mike."



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### **Danny Smith**

When Danny Smith learned about Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, he immediately took the initiative to gather information about their services. The moment he reached out, ARS wasted no time in connecting him with a counselor.



Danny's counselor worked closely with him to determine his eligibility for the aid and developed an action plan to address his specific needs. Through ongoing communication, Danny and his counselor discussed the challenges he faced and strategized on the solutions he could apply to maintain his full-time employment.

Today, Danny works at Harmony Janitorial and Building LLC. where his newfound independence has given him the strength and confidence he needs to navigate his physical challenges and excel at his job.



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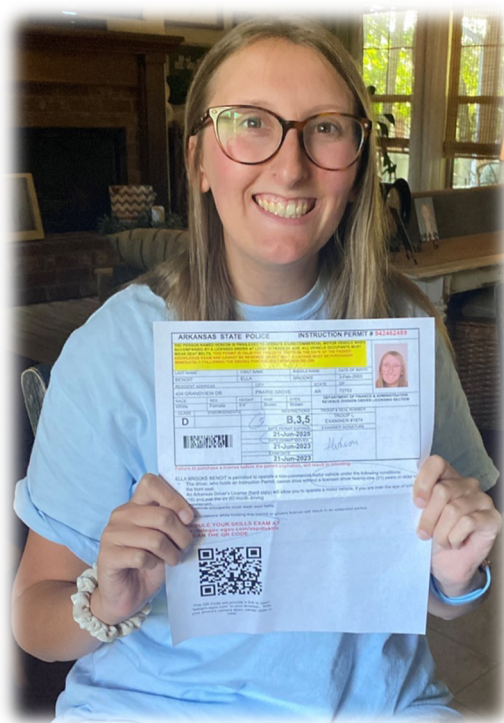
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### **Ella Benoit**

Ella Benoit's journey towards independence began in high school when she joined ARS's Pre ETS program. While attending school at Prairie Grove High School, she began receiving Transition Services before her graduation in May 2023.

The Arkansas Support Network provided Ella with individual job placement services which led to job placement. She now finds solace and purpose in her position as a Childcare Worker, caring for and nurturing infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children.

Ella's dedication and hard work paid off when she obtained her Learner's Permit, a milestone she proudly attributes to the assistance she received from ARS and the ACDC Driver Ed I program. She had always dreamed of being able to drive, and now, with the permit in her hands, she is one step closer to her pursuit of independence. She thanks ARS for its assistance in her achievements.





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### **James Kearny**

Despite facing obstacles due to his disabilities, James Kearny's journey is a testament to resilience and the power of support. From the very beginning, he made his communication needs known during his intake interview with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Being deaf and relying on American Sign Language (ASL), he emphasized the importance of having an interpreter present to effectively communicate with others. ARS, understanding the significance of this reasonable accommodation, provided him with the necessary support.

One of James's goals was to obtain his driver's license. Through ARS, he enrolled in the Driver's Education Permit Class at the Arkansas Career Development Center. Accompanied by an interpreter, he successfully passed his written driving test for the first time at the age of 31. The joy and excitement he felt after several previous attempts brought him a newfound sense of accomplishment.

To further develop his driving skills, James participated in a driving skills class at Thompson Driving School. He was fortunate to have a deaf instructor who could effectively communicate with him using ASL. With the aid of an interpreter during the driving skills test with the AR State Police, he triumphantly passed and fulfilled his dream of becoming a licensed driver.



While he achieved his driving goals, James faced challenges in his employment at Amazon. After working diligently as a warehouse worker for over a year and a half, he was let go due to his perceived slow performance. Understandably upset about the dismissal based on his disability, he turned to his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for guidance. They encouraged him to file an EEOC discrimination complaint against his employer.

James attended a hearing with his employers and presented his case against the discriminatory actions taken towards him. Within a week he was reinstated back to the warehouse. His new role consisted of lighter work, catering to his physical abilities and ensuring a more suitable working environment.

James's gratitude towards ARS is evident. Not only was he assisted in achieving his independence by obtaining his driver's license, but he was also provided with vital support during his employment dispute. The services and accommodations received from ARS enabled him to continue his work at Amazon and regain his satisfaction with his job.



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### **Robert Garner**

Robert Garner has faced challenges on his journey due to his diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome. It had often made him feel like an outsider, struggling to connect with others, especially in larger social gatherings. The idea of pursuing a career and living independently seemed like a distant dream due to the complexities of his condition.

After graduating from high school, Robert's mother, Lisa King, took the initiative to seek help from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS). They opened a Vocational Rehabilitation case and embarked on a path towards transforming his life.

Robert's counselor guided him towards Educational Training services which led to him earning a Bachelor of General Studies degree from Arkansas State University. Despite his academic achievements, he found it challenging to make progress towards employment and greater independence. Recognizing the need for further assistance, his mother reached out to ARS once again.

This time, Robert's counselor presented him with an opportunity to participate in Project SEARCH, an internship program conducted at St. Bernard's Medical Center. The program spanned over nine months and allowed him to gain practical experience in various departments while receiving valuable feedback and support from the Project SEARCH staff.

While interning, Robert's progress reports shone with positivity, a testament to his hard work and willingness to accept feedback. The staff at St. Bernard's was deeply impressed by his dedication and passion for his work. They saw his potential and upon the completion of his internship in May 2023, offered him a job in the admissions department.

As Robert prepared for his first day at St. Bernard's, he knew he had found a place where his abilities would be recognized and valued. Regarding his involvement with ARS, Robert wrote, "ARS was very understanding of my wanting to become independent and helped me through all the hurdles that came my way."

