



## Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

# ARS Success Stories

## October 2023

### **Brandon Hawkins**



With dreams of having a career in construction, Brandon Hawkins has finally taken the first steps toward independence. He could hardly believe that he had gotten this far - all thanks to ARS and Arkansas Career Development Center's Driver's Ed I program. Now, he's ready to embrace the road ahead.

The road is a literal one, in this case. Brandon has just obtained his Learner's Permit, and the world of driving lay open before him. He felt a surge of excitement and pride as he contemplated this newfound freedom.

Brandon and his mother took a moment to thank ARS for all the help he's received. It was because of their support and encouragement that he was now able to pursue his dreams. And as he continued to press forward on his journey toward independence, he knew that ARS would be there to guide him every step of the way.



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### Elizabeth Rios



It was at Riverview High School four years ago that Elizabeth Rios first heard about the services offered by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. ARS counselor, Lisa Earls, informed her of the support and resources available to help her pursue her dreams.

With a newfound sense of purpose and drive, Elizabeth embarked on a journey to become an MRI Technologist. She pursued her associate degree at ASU-Beebe in 2019, with the help of Counselor Earls.

Following graduating with her associate degree, Elizabeth excelled in the Radiology Program at UAMS. In May 2022, she

graduated from the program with a bachelor's degree and secured a full-time job as an MRI Tech.



Reflecting on her journey, Elizabeth says she "does not have any regrets and loves her job, and everyone has a dream and should follow it."



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### **Loresa Willis**

Despite being born with arthrogryposis, a joint disorder, Loresa Willis refused to let her condition define her or hold her back. From learning to walk at the age of three to using her toes to eat and color, she showed incredible ingenuity and adaptability.

However, her biggest challenge came when she wanted to learn how to drive. It was her supervisor at Walmart, Lana Luginbill, who encouraged her to pursue her dream and put her in contact with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. With the help of ARS, Loresa was able to find a vendor in Houston, Texas, that could modify a van to fit her needs and allow her to take her driving test. In 2012, after months of hard work and dedication, Loresa finally passed her driving test and purchased a 2012 GMC Terrain. That same vendor modified her Terrain, and ARS assisted with financing.

For the next ten years, Loresa cherished her modified vehicle and used it to travel all over Arkansas. However, as with all machines, parts started to wear down and malfunction, and Loresa found herself back at Arkansas Rehabilitation Services seeking assistance for a new vehicle. She chose to purchase a 2022 GMC Terrain and, once again, reached out to the same vendor in Houston, Texas, that had helped her a decade earlier.

In May of 2023, Loresa was delivered her modified vehicle and couldn't be happier. She expressed her gratitude towards Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and her Walmart supervisor, who never stopped believing in her and supporting her dreams. Loresa's story is a true inspiration and shows that, with the right mindset and support, anything is possible.



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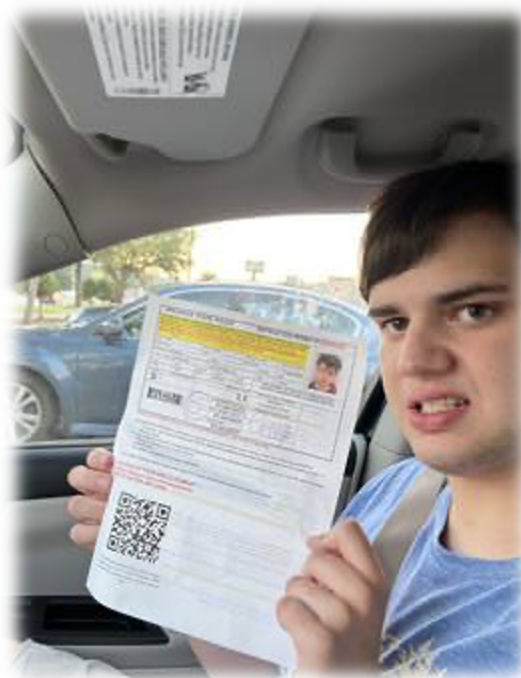
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### Van Hopkins

With the help of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Arkansas Career Development Center's Driver's Ed I program, Van Hopkins was able to obtain his Learner's Permit, an achievement he is very proud of. And now, as he enters his Freshman Year at the University of the Ozarks to major in Mechanical Engineering, Van is ready to take his independence to the next level by getting behind the wheel.



Van's father couldn't be more grateful for the assistance ARS has provided, and he knows his son will continue to excel with their support. Van, too, is excited to keep pressing forward with the help of ARS.