

disABILITY Inclusion Works: Eric's Story

Shared by Eric's Job Development Counselor



#InclusionWorks

I felt a little silly as I sat in a seminar hosted by our state disability agency when my eyes teared up in public. I was attending a briefing on the agency's own employees with disabilities. The speaker described the accomplishments of a young man, blind from birth. After a litany of his firsts and successes had been touted, she said his name—we'll call him Eric. *That was my Eric.* Wow! The reason for my smile was multi-pronged, as you can imagine. The gentleman sitting next to me at the seminar detected my humility and asked if I knew Eric or had worked with him. I affirmed I worked with him in vocational rehabilitation—specifically job development. The man asked if I had gotten Eric his job. I emphatically said, "No. Eric got his job all on his own. I only helped make sure that applications and documents were submitted as required, and drove him to a couple of interviews."

Eric came to my job development program armed with a college degree, articulate and well-groomed traits, workplace competencies, and a personality that filled the room. What he didn't have was a job. What he needed were a few potential employers to look beyond his white cane. What he wanted was the opportunity to support himself and to be able to show others that his white cane was not an obstacle to his abilities in the workplace. He wanted to set the example for the ROI of Disability Employment. By simply having help navigating the internet application processes, being provided reliable transportation for interviews, and having a few documents in order, Eric was hired. His role was a part-time program coordinator for the division's internship program. Within a year, he was charged with the full-time oversight of that same program. Five years later, he earns a competitive income with health benefits plus a retirement plan in a sustainable career he loves with the same agency. He also lives independently. Is there any better ROI?

Update—May 2016: I saw Eric two weeks ago, and he was married two months before!