

disABILITY Inclusion Works: Melissa's Story

Shared by Melissa's Job Development Counselor



#InclusionWorks

Melissa flashes her likable smile to every customer today, as she has for over a year. You know– the kind of smile that you feel in your own cheeks when you see it? She seldom smiled two years ago when I first met her. Melissa is visually impaired and is mildly developmentally delayed. Having moved from the familiarity of her small community and from the daily support of her family and friends, Melissa tentatively settled into an array of training and rehabilitation programs in Columbus, Ohio. Overwhelmed but determined, there were more tears than smiles during the first few months as she learned to navigate the bus system, do her own laundry, prepare her own meals, practice for interviews, acquire personal money management skills, and establish a network of healthcare providers. Her determination paid off when she was accepted a full-time position in customer service with a major grocery retailer. Twenty months later, Melissa has plenty to smile about because she enjoys a sustainable job, competitive income with health benefits, a growing circle of friends and support, independent living, and her first boyfriend! Her family is very proud of her, and I am so happy for her.