

2-4-11

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee
Health and Human Services
Chairman Don Roberts

Dear Committee,

Vocational Rehabilitation opened doors for me.

I have cerebral palsy and use a wheelchair for mobility because of limited motor skills. I grew up in Eureka, Montana which is dominated by labor intensive jobs; jobs that my disability wouldn't allow me to do. In order to feel I was a contributing member of society, I had to get a college degree and use my brain power rather than my muscle power. VR gave me the necessary resources to accomplish this goal. It was difficult, but without VR it would not have been possible.

Now I have a full-time job at Summit Independent Living Center; a job that requires a college degree. I facilitate classes, work with youth, give community presentations, and pay taxes. I am a contributing member of society.

People do not come from assembly lines and are not mirror images of each other. We have varying skills, desires, and disabilities. There's a need for a program to identify the assets of an individual and provide the needed resources so that person can fulfill their potential. This is what Vocational Rehabilitation does.

Sincerely,

Darren Larson

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Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the joint appropriations subcommittee for health and human services,

I was a 17 year old regular ole kid in High School. Hunting, fishing and running with my friends. One day I was in a terrible traffic accident that left me a paraplegic.

I now became a wheelchair user and a person with a disability. My hopes and dreams had changed.

I finished high school, went to work for Semi Tool, where sitting in my new chair caused me to have bed sores that left me totally out of commission for a year. I had to have my hip joint removed to get rid of the infection, laying in bed for a year and getting my wheelchair pads adjusted so that I could work/sit for long periods of time left me unemployed for 2 years.

With the help of VR I went to WyoTech and learned auto mechanics, welding and hot rods. I returned to the Valley to look for work just when the auto industry began to fail. I had very minimal success.

VR assisted me with writing a PASS plan to purchase a vehicle, and I use hand controls to drive.

A year ago I went to work for an Aerospace company with the help of my job coach in Kalispell where I began as a deburrer and advanced with the assistance of VR paying for Mastercam to become a quality control personnel, checking the parts for perfection.

I am a very important part of the Aerospace company, it is my job to see that the parts that go on the Boeing Airplanes are perfect when they leave the shop.

I hunt with my dad, fish with my friends and work for a company that allows me to grow, be independent and self sufficient. Work has allowed me to be independent of Social Security benefits and I no longer get the check, I earn the money that provides for me.

Thank you for fully funding vocational rehabilitation services. It's a great Montana program.

Sincerely,

David Singleton

VR Story

I was born with a rare eye disorder, Aniridia. As a result, I am legally blind. I have never let my disability stop me from pursuing my dreams. These dreams included earning a Master's degree, buying a home, and having a successful career. These dreams required hard work. Yet, I am now 27 year old and have accomplished all those dreams. Vocational Rehabilitation played a key role in that success. VR provided me with career counseling in high school, assisting me in finding a career I would excel at. When I attended college VR helped provide the resources I needed to achieve my best. This included a large screen monitor so that I could get all my assignments done. While I put in all the hard work required to lead a successful life, VR was there to assist me to ensure I reached my dreams. That is what VR does. Now on to the next set of dreams.....

Gene Hermanson

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