

Testimony of Joshua Laird

I first came to Somerset community Services in December of 2011 after aging out of the foster care system. I had no real work experience and had a very difficult time adjusting to all the new changes. I had a lot of behavioral issues and most had to do with me not having a lot of money.

I began doing contract work in the day program, however, the money wasn't that great and I was still very frustrated. Staff began to look at opportunities outside of SCS and I got a job folding pizza boxes at a local restaurant. I really didn't enjoy it and returned to doing subminimum wage contract work at the day program. Somerset Community Services gave me the opportunity to work on the lawn crew and the money was starting to be better, but I still needed help remaining on task. I was dismissed from that job twice but was hopeful.

All throughout this experience, I had staff who were willing to encourage and mentor me to overcome some of my obstacles. In 2016 I became a part of the Workforce Training center at SCS and learned valuable job skills that would help me gain competitive employment. I learned self confidence skills, and

interviewing skills. In conjunction with that training, I worked with my residential and programming staff to learn better decision making and budgeting skills. I began learning window washing skills which then led me to a small paid position. Afterwards I interviewed and gained a job cleaning the local marina parking lot. I really liked this job because I was able to be outside and listen to my music while working. I did so well that after the season was over, they invited me to return the next season. This made me feel more confident. I worked so hard and started having less and less behaviors. After 3 years of working at the marina, I interviewed for a job at Salisbury University in their Dining Facilities. I was hired and I am now working on my second semester of competitive employment with them. On my off time from the University, I continue to work at the marina from April through September.

I as well as my team are proud of my success. I have gone from not being able to keep money to opening and budgeting my own bank account. I transitioned successfully from Sheltered workshop work to competitive Integrated employment.