Jonathon K’s Story: Teamwork Pays Off

Jonathon K graduated from the University of West Florida with a major in Parks & Recreation Business Management and a completed internship at Disney. At the time of his injury, he was attending Pensacola State College with the intention of being a large animal veterinarian. He loved working with horses and owned several. He taught riding lessons, entered his horses in shows and was active in his community church.

In 1997, Jonathon was riding in the back of a truck that was pulling a horse on a lead rope. The horse spooked and pulled him out of the truck, causing him to strike his head on the truck bed and then the ground. His brain injury left him with significant weakness on his right side, affecting his gait and the use of his right arm and hand, and a minor but noticeable speech problem. Executive function impairments make it difficult for Jonathon to self-assess and make realistic evaluations of his capabilities.

When Jonathon came to Brain Injury Association of Florida (BIAF), he was working about six hours per week for a cleaning company where his wife was employed. When he decided to look for full time work so he could get off disability, his BIAF Resource Facilitation Coordinator (RFC) helped him to apply for services from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). When it became available, he and his VR counselor agreed to participate in the Project RESULTS (Realistic Employment Strategies – Ultimate Long-Term Success) grant, which incorporates a comprehensive support system and Community Advocacy Teams consisting of professionals from multiple agencies working together with the brain injury survivor to develop and implement long-term strategies and goals for the survivor.

Working as part of a team enabled the RFC to assist with planning, meetings, resume writing and job applications. Jonathon was referred to Southeastern Vocational Services, where he and the RFC met monthly with an employment specialist who assisted in determining appropriate employment opportunities for Jonathon. The RFC’s certification as a Brain Injury Specialist and her knowledge of Jonathon’s post-injury history and challenges helped the team to decide what types of employment would be most likely to yield a successful outcome.

Jonathon is currently employed by Gulf Coast Enterprises via Southeastern Vocational Services, working in the Scullery as a dishwasher at the Navy base in Pensacola. It may not be his dream job, but he is happy to be making money and knows that, with time, he can apply for other positions within the company. Like the other success stories made possible by Project RESULTS, teamwork made the difference in his story.