

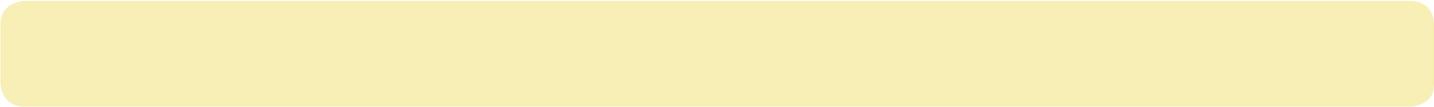
VFPS

Vocational Futures Planning and Support

Where are they now?



It has been more than 15 years since the VFPS was first implemented in Wisconsin. A number of individuals with significant physical disabilities realized career goals using the process and the support of a dedicated team. The following stories highlight a few of their successes and accomplishments.



JOHN

Coating Place, Inc.
Parts Technician



John wanted a job close to home, and in his small community the opportunities were somewhat limited. John had never worked, and with a progressive condition called Fredrick's Ataxia, he relied on a wheelchair for mobility. With good upper body strength, however, he could do light labor. Through the VFPS process, John explored options for the type of employment that would match his skills and abilities.

After hearing John's story and talking about his employment goals and abilities, his Employment Specialist thought about her network of employers and arranged for John to meet with local business owners. The Employment Specialist arranged for an informational interview for John with a local employer. The owner instantly took a liking to John and wanted to find an opportunity in his company.

The company makes the material used to coat medication. With help from the Employment Specialist, the owner conducted a needs analysis and found that certain tasks were not getting done on time because other employees were focused on more essential tasks. John was hired part-time to clean the parts used in the development process.

The owner insisted on paying John the same hourly wage he paid other employees, even though John's productivity was lower due to his physical limitations.

Being newly employed, John worried about the impact of work on his health benefits. A Work Incentives Benefits Specialist (WIBS) worked with John and his employer to ensure he was able to maintain necessary health benefits.

Where is he now?

Thirteen years later, John is still employed at the Coating Place. Although his progressive neurological disease is taking its toll, John is proud to say that most people with his condition don't live to see their 40th birthday. John just turned 41. He attributes his longevity to his job, which gives him purpose, and his colleagues, whom he calls family. Being a social guy, he claims he would have died long ago sitting in his apartment alone every day. His work-station exemplifies his favorite sports team, the Dallas Cowboys, which his co-workers rib him about constantly.

LISA

Self-Employed
Graphic Designer



After graduating with a degree in graphic design from UW-La Crosse, Lisa struggled with the decision to be employed by a company or be self-employed. Through the VFPS process she explored both options and determined the type of employment that suited her best.

She began VFPS services in 2001. At the time, she was unsure if she should pursue self-employment or work for an employer using her graphic design degree. To help her decide, her VFPS Employment Specialist arranged informational interviews with employers and self-employed graphic designers.

In these informational interviews, Lisa learned that she needed web design training and experience in order to make herself more marketable. One of the informational interviews led to an offer for additional training and mentoring in web design, which would give her a more diverse skill set. Lisa's DVR counselor agreed to fund web design training with Lisa's mentor, Don. After learning from Don, Lisa decided to pursue self-employment. This decision was based on many factors with the pros and cons of being self-employed being explored by Lisa and her VFPS Resource Team. After her exploration, Lisa was able to validate her goal and pursue self-employment.

Because transportation was a major barrier for her, Lisa decided to write a PASS Plan in order to purchase and modify a van.

She describes the support she received from her Work Incentives Benefits Specialist (WIBS) as being "invaluable." She worked closely with the Benefits Specialist to get the PASS plan approved and received ongoing support over the duration of the PASS.

The road to self-employment with DVR at the time was a rigorous one, involving required classes and an extensive business plan. The Employment Specialist, and the mentor supported her through the process of writing the plan, which was approved by DVR. Lisa describes her business as being slow at first, but it picked up over time. Among many accomplishments are designing a logo that is used by the Social Security Administration.

Where is she now?

Lisa continues to create many websites and is currently providing a 7-week training course to DVR Consumers as well as one-to-one training. The Employment Specialist and the people who advised Lisa, what calls her "dream team", have become her colleagues, actively providing referrals and continued opportunities to learn and grow.

TIM

Vortex Optics
International Accounts Manager



During several attempts at pursuing college studies, Tim determined that school was not the right fit for him. Through the VFPS process he explored alternative career choices that better matched his changing physical capabilities and evolving interests.

Tim was an outdoor enthusiast feeling confined by business school. While Tim was studying general business, he sought the assistance of a Work Incentives Benefits Specialist to help him understand how working would affect his benefits. After getting to know the benefit specialists, he confessed that school wasn't a good fit for him at that time. He didn't really know what his true interests were and sitting in a classroom all day was confining. An Employment Specialist got involved and, with support from his VR counselor, Tim began the process of exploring other interests.

Tim had done some repairs on his wheelchair as well as his friends and found that he enjoyed it. His Employment Specialist arranged some informational interviews and they found a company that fit Tim's skills and abilities and they hired him to go to training on wheelchair repairs. His VR counselor funded part of Tim's salary while he was learning using an on-the-job training contract with the employer.

Tim was very successful at the work, but after about a year and a half, his doctor advised him to look for other work. Tim was cutting himself and developing other physical problems because he was bent over his work all day. Tim asked his VFPS Resource Team for more assistance.

As an avid outdoorsman/hunter, Tim was perfect for a retail position, selling optical equipment for hunters, bird watchers, etc. He was so successful that the owner of the company promoted him to store manager after a few years. Next, he went to work in their catalogue sales division as a manager.

Where is he now?

Currently, Tim is an accounts manager for a sister company called Vortex Optics. He works with dealers all over the country. Tim was even able to build a home with the money he earned.

VOCATIONAL FUTURES PLANNING AND SUPPORT (VFPS)

For more information on VFPS visit:

<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/physical/futures.htm>

or

<http://percthinkwork.org/resources/list/category/VFPS>



www.percthinkwork.org