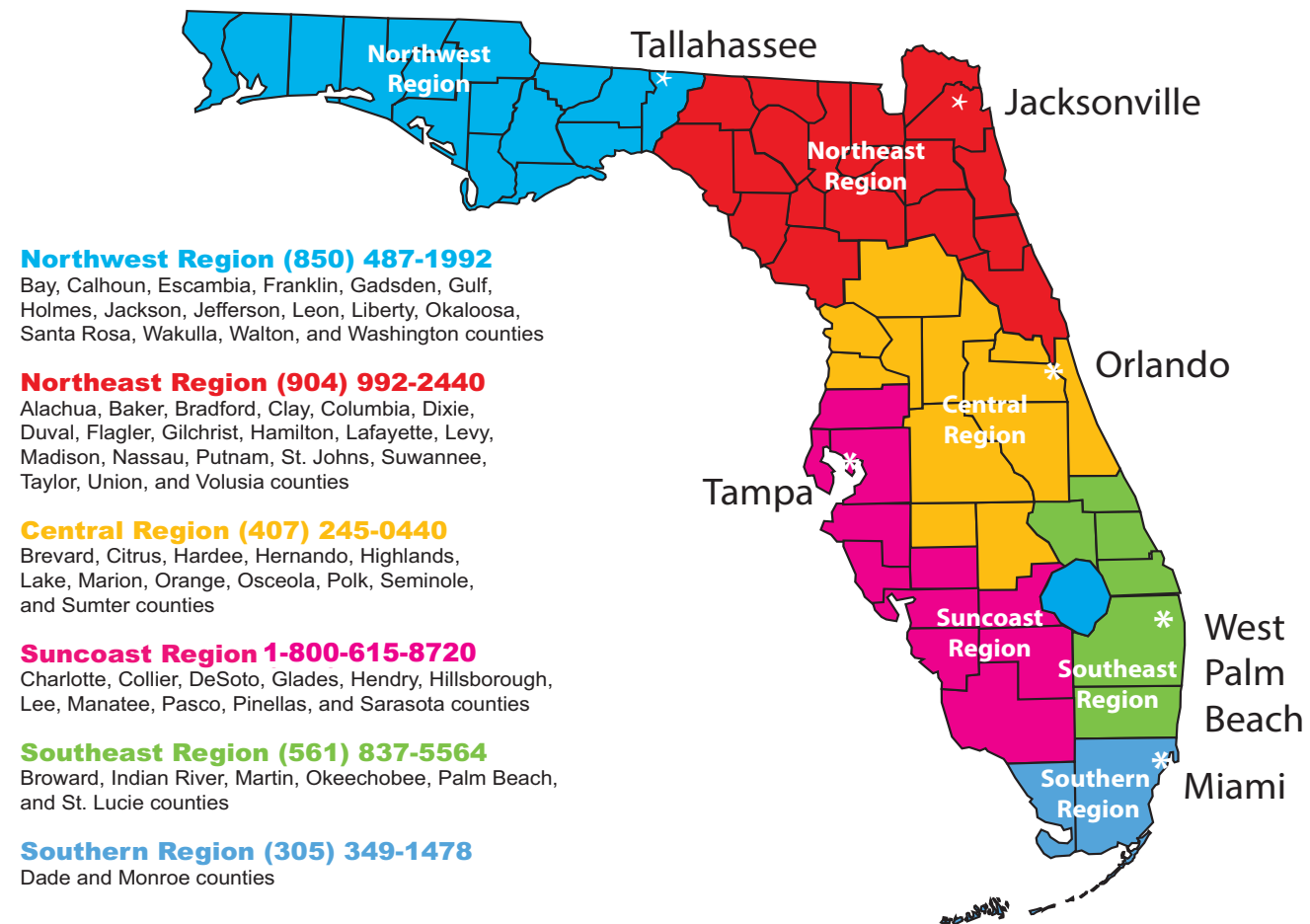


APD Regional Offices



Enhancement Project (EEP) Success Stories



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apdcares.org

April 2015





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Employment Enhancement Project

The Florida Legislature allocated \$500,000 for the Employment Enhancement Project (EEP) for Fiscal Years (FYs) 2013-14 and 2014-15. Additional funds for this project are included in the governor's recommended budget for FY 2015-16.

The purpose of the EEP is to provide opportunities for competitive employment to individuals on the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) waiting list who want a job. Competitive employment means working in the community side-by-side with individuals without disabilities, earning minimum wage or higher.

The highest priority is made for people who are leaving the school system to begin working in competitive employment in their communities. Job seekers must not have an active case with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and they must be at least 18 years of age. Job seekers must be on the APD waiting list. If the job seeker is receiving services through VR, they will continue to get VR services until they have a job and reach job stabilization. APD will then assist with ongoing supported employment follow-along services for continued employment success.

Through the EEP supported employment providers, APD can pay for services or items that will assist the individual in obtaining and retaining competitive employment, including transportation for a limited time.

The APD regional office staff identifies potential job seekers on the waiting list. Support coordinators confirm with the job seeker that they are interested in obtaining competitive employment and verify that they are not receiving any services through VR. APD supported employment providers assess job seekers' skills, assist with resume development, set up mock interviews, and connect job seekers with job clubs, internships, and other pathways to potential jobs. They also work with employers to identify current job openings.

The EEP has been successful in connecting hundreds of job seekers with competitive employment or internships at an average cost to APD of \$2,400 per person.

Chequita Jones

Chequita Jones is a single parent with a beautiful young daughter. In 2011, after high school graduation, she moved out on her own with the desire to provide the best life possible for herself and her daughter. This desire led to secure, suitable housing and employment. She interviewed and selected an employment coach to help her in obtaining and maintaining employment.

The coach helped her create a resume and submit applications. Jones quickly learned how to present herself for interviews with potential employers. Prior to her first interview, Jones participated in a short-term internship, where she was exposed to an actual work environment. She then had several interviews which resulted in employment at the Patrick Air Force Base Commissary in Satellite Beach where she works the night shift. This is Jones' first job and her determination and dedication to this position is noticed by everyone.

Jones is a valued employee who continues to work with her coaches and supervisors to learn new aspects of the job. Her customer service skills are exhibited through her friendly, professional manner. She provides assistance

to her co-workers and is appreciated by all who work closely with her. Since becoming employed, she has learned how to use the county transit system, resulting in even greater independence.

In addition to her employment success, Jones has set up a family budget, pays her monthly bills, and is currently setting up a savings account for emergency purposes.



Chequita Jones

Troy Holmes and William York

Can you say employment works? Actually two individuals know firsthand that employment works. Pensacola area residents Troy Holmes and William York are on the Agency for Persons with Disabilities waiting list. They are also Employment Enhancement Project (EEP) participants.

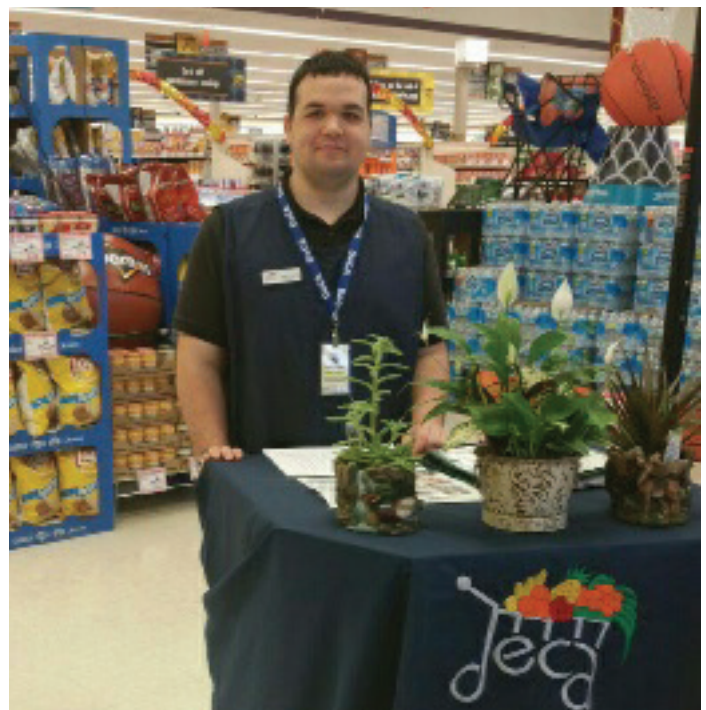
The APD Northwest Region was able to build a solid partnership with the Naval Air Station (NAS) Commissary at Corry Station. NAS had two available positions for identification store checkers. The positions were listed on a GS-2 pay-scale at \$11.17 per hour averaging 25 hours each. Job

Coach Carolin Sutton helped Holmes and York apply for positions. After several candidates submitted applications for the position, Holmes and York were notified that they had been hired at NAS Corry Station.

On March 23, Holmes and York were sworn in as government employees. They will accrue sick leave and annual leave, as well as pay raises after being employed for a year. The EEP is helping individuals become gainfully and competitively employed.



Troy Holmes



William York

Taniesha Johnson-Cromartie

Taniesha Johnson-Cromartie is motivated by her desire to provide financially for her family and become as independent as possible. Johnson-Cromartie was receptive to guidance for job placement including interview preparation, assistance with interview attire, and personal appearance. Because she likes helping people, a customer service environment was identified as the ideal employment setting. Her employment specialist assisted her in applying for jobs with several employers, including the Publix in St.

Petersburg. Johnson-Cromartie was excited to learn that Publix had offered her a job.

Johnson-Cromartie was also thankful for assistance with understanding and completing paperwork for both employment and housing. Johnson-Cromartie is a mother of four and has taken comfort in the fact that she is now gainfully employed. She is all smiles when talking about her family, her job, her own residence, and now her own vehicle.



Taniesha Johnson-Cromartie (right) with Marlena at Publix in St. Petersburg

Philip Cheeseborough

The family of Philip Cheeseborough has provided exceptional support which has enhanced his preparation for the competitive workforce. His pathway to employment began with obtaining his driver's license, allowing him to be more independent.

Cheeseborough possesses uncanny artistic skill in animation. He and his family decided to think outside the box to ensure that his creative skills, his aptitude for computers, and his desire for animation design would continue to grow. His knowledge of movies and his passion for designing and animation led him to the big screen at Tallahassee's AMC Theatre, a company committed to a corporate culture of diversity. After completing his online application and assessment, Cheeseborough accepted an interview that included a walking tour with open-ended questions. He was confident throughout the process, demonstrating what he learned through his support systems.

AMC Theatre was a perfect fit for Cheeseborough. AMC offered him a part-time position with many perks, including free movie admissions. After only two weeks on the job, his hours were increased. Cheeseborough currently works as an usher—greeting, directing

guests, and tearing tickets. He also enforces movie ratings and keeps underage guests from accessing adult-content auditoriums. He ensures picture and sound quality, temperature, lighting, and appropriate guest behavior in each auditorium. AMC affords him an opportunity to continue to develop his interest in animation design, while being a contributing member of the AMC Theatre team.



Philip Cheeseborough

Dominic Davis

Dominic Davis is so happy that he recently landed his first job. Davis refuses to allow his learning disability or his past difficulties with social and community adjustments to prohibit him from achieving his lifelong dream of becoming a cook. He hopes to eventually own his own restaurant.

Davis and his job coach, Carolyn Sutton of Express Employment Services, set out on an active job search plan for employment within the food services industry. After many job applications and some interviews, he was finally offered employment at a Burger King in Pensacola. Davis' hiring manager immediately recognized his determination and creativity. Of his hiring manager Davis said, "She looked beyond my past record and she saw that I really wanted to be a Burger King team member." Davis is now exuberant, knowing he is on the right track to a long life of earning wages, gaining independence, and having an opportunity to achieve his dreams.



Dominic Davis

Graham Glover

Graham Glover is a quiet guy whose hard work speaks for itself. He has worked at the Lake Ella Publix in Tallahassee since November 2012. He serves as a front end service clerk and works about 30 hours a week. "I like my boss and co-workers and feel like part of the team. Having a job makes me feel proud of myself."

Glover is responsible for providing great customer service, which is expected of all Publix employees. He also bags groceries, helps shoppers with their groceries, and cleans the store as needed. "Graham is willing to do anything that is asked of him. He is a loyal, dependable employee," said Publix Store Manager Howard Nishimoto. Glover is eager to maintain employment; he is always polite to shoppers and dresses for success. Nishimoto said, "He gets along with everyone, has a positive attitude, and always dresses professionally."

"When I'm not working I like to hang out with friends and watch movies and sports," said Glover. His favorite team is the University of Florida Gators. One reason he wants to work is to earn money to pay bills. He has his own car and lives in his own apartment. Glover wants to be an entrepreneur in the future. "I want to own a kennel. I love animals," he said.



Graham Glover

Michael Askins

The Employment Enhancement Project (EEP) led by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) enabled Michael Askins to provide for his family. When he began his search for employment, his wife was pregnant and restricted from working until after the baby's birth.

APD analyzed Askins' strengths and interests to assist in the search. He applied with landscaping outfits, moving companies, and restaurants. Askins is a hard worker who loves the outdoors, fast-paced environments, and completing projects. Most of all, he wanted to provide for the needs of his family.

In a short time, Askins obtained two part-time positions, one at TSL Landscaping in Belleview and another at the McDonald's in Summerfield. His skills and ability to keep up with the fast pace of the landscaping crew impressed the manager, and they increased his hours so that he now works full-time. He still works at McDonald's on an as-needed basis.



Michael Askins

Gerell Robinson

Gerell Robinson lives with his grandmother and used to take two buses to get to work at a Miami Goodwill store. He has demonstrated that he can overcome whatever challenge comes his way.

Robinson began working at Goodwill Industries in 2010 as part of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Transition Program. His first position with Goodwill was in the Work Activities Center while he was still attending high school. He transferred to the Manufacturing Department as a sewing operator, making uniforms for the Armed Forces. In February 2014, as part of the Employment Enhancement Project (EEP), Robinson was transferred to the Donated Goods Department as a material handler, earning more than the minimum wage. Each time Robinson transferred to a new department within Goodwill, he was promoted with an increase in pay.

Ben Bobillo, who serves as Robinson's job coach, indicated that Robinson expressed a desire to work in a more integrated work

environment. This meant that Robinson was confident enough to work alongside others without developmental disabilities. The EEP team, which is constantly looking for employment opportunities, connected Robinson with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI was hiring for a new facility in Miramar near Robinson's home. This was a match made in heaven.

Robinson passed the background check and was hired. He began working for the FBI in November 2014. His supervisor says, "Robinson is productive, happy, and doing fine."



Gerell Robinson

Sandra Alonso

Sandra Alonso, a job seeker on the Agency for Persons with Disabilities' waiting list, was also a successful student in Project Panther Life at Florida International University, a project that provides a comprehensive postsecondary program and system of supports for students with intellectual disabilities.

Alonso has been receiving job coaching services funded by the Employment Enhancement Project (EEP) since February 2014. She has been working steadily and consistently with her job coach, Melanie Sterner, from Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Sterner reports that Alonso has truly blossomed throughout their time working together. Both Alonso and Sterner say that although initially resistant to the concept of working, Alonso has come to embrace and appreciate the positive outcomes that she has experienced through her employment at a TJ Maxx store in Miami.



Sandra Alonso

Erik Olesen

Erik Olesen made such a good impression during his internship that he earned a position with Green Light Fire Bag in Lake County.

Green Light Fire Bag makes kits to start campfires by re-purposing used paper livestock feed sacks. Workers load them with USDA-approved kiln-dried firewood and add a special blend of chemical free, eco-friendly, and sustainable materials. A box of matches is attached to the inside of the bag. They sew the bag closed so nothing is lost. Finally, they have a complete fire kit that can be stored for as long as wanted. Olesen places the matches in the bag and has other responsibilities as well.

Olesen is enjoying his job. He said, "I like putting together the boxes and gluing the matches." APD Employment Liaison Cindy Drew worked with Executive Director Paula Whetro of Building Block Ministries to help arrange the internship for Olesen. Whetro was familiar with Olesen, having worked with him since 2006. Whetro states, "Our program is designed to assist adults with varying developmental disabilities to obtain and maintain life skills, jobs skills, independence, and employment opportunities. By partnering with employers in our community we have been able to place our participants, like Erik, in meaningful and gainful employment positions." Drew said,

"His employer is exceptionally pleased with his work. It took a lot of time and effort to put this into place, and I am happy it is working out so well."

Green Light Fire Bag Vice President David Hidalgo said, "Green Light Fire Bag has long believed that a strong workforce is inclusive of the talents and skills of all individuals. We have been extremely impressed by Erik's work ethic, performance, and aptitude in the workplace and are pleased to provide workplace accommodations to ensure his success."

Green Light Fire Bag is a fast-growing company. Now Olesen, an individual with a disability, is helping the company achieve even greater success.



Erik Olesen and David Hidalgo



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