

REALIZING POTENTIAL

CLEARBROOK'S COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES HELPS PEOPLE REACH THEIR GOALS

For some with intellectual or developmental disabilities, their dream is to have a job. But for their parents, siblings, or whoever may be caring for them, the idea of their loved one working can be scary.

This was true for Zak, 22, and his mom, Justine. Zak had recently aged out of his transition program and wanted something to do. Justine knew he was going stir crazy but was hesitant to let him look for work due to horror stories she heard of employers hiring people with disabilities. Enter Clearbrook's Community Employment Services. "My fear was gone 100% after talking to Shawna, one of Clearbrook's Job Development Coordinators. She was such an advocate for him and he was able to grow so much more when I was able to let him go."

Zak signed on with Clearbrook in October 2019 after Justine heard about them from his transition program in Elgin. "They were very thoughtful and considerate about the capabilities of the person they're dealing with," Justine said. Clearbrook helped Zak get a job at a pizza place in Elgin then at Coopers Hawk in St. Charles after the pizza place closed down. "Clearbrook nailed it both times—finding the balance of keeping him challenged enough, but also not working him too hard."

Coopers Hawk, Justine said, absolutely embraced Zak. Zak works three days per week as a dishwasher and food runner. For the first 90 days, a job coach from Clearbrook worked with Zak to help him focus and strengthen on-the-job skills before he worked independently.

When asked what he likes about the job, Zak says "everybody there, I have a lot of friends." One of them, Mario, even has him helping sort fresh produce and portion meats. Understandably, Justine was nervous about the communication between herself and Zak's supervisor—something she said she actually never had to worry about, the job coach took care of it all. "Parents have to feel confident with who they leave their kid with and I've never been concerned with anyone from Clearbrook. Ever. The whole team. The way they communicated with me and the employer. I can't fathom why anyone wouldn't use Clearbrook."

When asked what she enjoyed about working with Clearbrook, Justine replied, "the people. They were so incredibly easy to work with. Zak absolutely loves the staff he works with at Clearbrook. The system is so difficult to work with and navigate. We came from a county that offered no services and they were super patient with all of my questions, always available and responsive. The job coaches were so patient with Zak. I couldn't imagine him being as successful without the guidance from Clearbrook. He would have been fine without it, but now he is exceptional."

Zak recently took the initiative, on his own, to get a second job at a local Culvers, which Justine feels reflects the growth he's made since becoming a part of the Clearbrook community.