

CHOICES

Spring 2024



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Community Options believes in the dignity of every person, and in the freedom of all people to experience the highest degree of self-determination. Embracing this philosophy, Community Options provides housing, support services and advocacy assistance to help empower people with disabilities. #AllItTakes

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Beyond Boundaries: Damoni's Career Launch at NASA Headquarters

In July 2023, Damoni Clark turned to Community Options for support seeking competitive employment. The Maryland Employment team worked with him to identify skills and interests, and practice interviewing. Together, they found the perfect workplace for a person with a passion for space exploration: NASA Headquarters in Washington D.C.

"I like the compliments I get sometimes from the people that work at NASA whenever they see me doing my job. I am also getting used to my work and I like the paycheck," said Damoni, reflecting on his experience since joining NASA's janitorial team three months ago.

Damoni demonstrated such exceptional dedication and work ethic that NASA recently hired another person supported by Community Options.

We hope Damoni's story inspires everyone to reach for the stars!



Enrique Celebrates 18 Years at Safeway

Today, Enrique Dominguez of Tucson, Arizona performs his job as a Courtesy Clerk at Safeway with ease. He has been a valued and loyal employee for 18 years.

The challenges Enrique experienced in the early days preparing for his job might not be apparent to Safeway customers and colleagues now, but Enrique and Community Options' employment staff spent many hours overcoming barriers.

Enrique took several other roles to prepare for his dream job, including supported employment positions at a thrift store, car wash, and dining facility.

When he finally got the job at Safeway, Enrique needed to adjust to an irregular schedule; staff taught him to tell time and use calendars and checklists to help him get ready in time. Home practice sessions were dedicated to refining Enrique's grocery bagging skills, and he learned new bus routes.

When asked why he's stayed loyal to Safeway for 18 years, Enrique replied, "Because I like it. I like working with people. It is busy and the work needs to be done."



Deni's Role with Spurs Sports Entertainment

Though he'd had volunteer roles before, Denilson (Deni) Alvarado-Eguia had never had a paying job until he enrolled in Community Options' supported employment program. His job coach gave him the confidence and tools he needed to enter the workforce. With a polished elevator pitch and a revamped resume in hand, Deni went to his interview at Spurs Sports Entertainment, where he secured the role of Fan Experience Representative. "I absolutely love my new job," said Deni. "Everyone in my family is so proud of me."

Deni found himself at the epicenter of excitement, stationed by the elevators at San Antonio Spurs games and rodeo events. Tasked with ensuring that guests find their way around safely, Deni quickly realized that his role meant much more. He's an integral part of the fan experience, contributing to the vibrant atmosphere at each event.



Kyden's Path to His Dream Job



Kyden Smiley's journey to his dream job at the George S. Eccles Dinosaur Park in Ogden, Utah was a rollercoaster ride of emotions, with each job rejection feeling like a heavy blow to his spirit. After seven months of searching, his perseverance paid off when he secured the position of Maintenance Technician.

"I like looking at the environment around me, the dinosaurs, and interacting with the kids," said Kyden. "What I love about this place is how calm it is and how it fits me so well."

Stepping into his third week at the park, Kyden found himself immersed in wonder and fulfillment, developing friendships with colleagues who became his pillars of support. Kyden's resilience is an inspiration.

Community Options Expands Relationship with NBA Foundation



Following a successful first year of collaboration, the NBA Foundation and Community Options announced an 18-month extension to place Black youth with disabilities in competitive and integrated employment.

Community Options' employment program targets youth in seven NBA markets: Dallas Mavericks, New York Knicks, Brooklyn Nets, San Antonio Spurs, Philadelphia 76ers, Phoenix Suns, and Utah Jazz.

Programming includes job exploration, where participants are guided to understand potential career paths; self-advocacy instruction to empower them in asserting their needs and rights in the workplace; work-based learning experiences to provide real-world job exposure; and counseling on post-secondary education and vocational training. Moreover, the program will facilitate job placement with on-the-job support. Follow-up services will address any ongoing needs, ensuring long-term success.

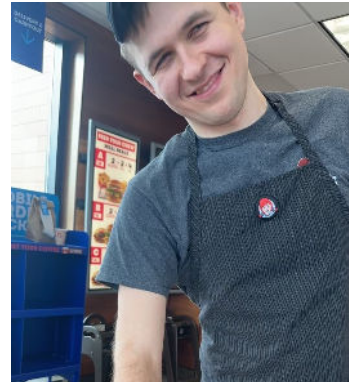
"When I founded Community Options in 1989, I sought to transform a system that oppressed people with disabilities by excluding them from their communities," said Robert Stack, Community Options' President and CEO. "With the continued support of the NBA Foundation, we will expand our employment programs to impact hundreds of youths with disabilities across the country. At Community Options we want to make sure access to these programs is offered to everyone, especially young people who did not receive equal and fair attention as they navigated service and education systems."

Marc's Lunchtime Legacy

Since June 2019, Marc Boyle has been an essential part of the Wendy's crew in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. As part of the lunch crew, Marc clears tables, restocks supplies, and keeps things ticking seamlessly during the rush.

"Marc is an asset to the team and always has a smile on his face," says his General Manager.

In the hustle and bustle of the lunch rush, Marc remains calm, efficient, and graceful. His warmth turns transactions into interactions, uplifting customers. It's no wonder that this year marks his 5-year anniversary.



Michael's New Beginning: Thriving at Target

After being laid off from his previous part-time job, Michael J. was referred to Community Options' employment team. Initially disheartened, Michael made the most of the setback by working with an Employment Specialist to find a better role.

Michael's Employment Specialist identified a new Target store opening near his residence. He applied and secured a full-time position as a Merchandise Associate in February. Michael feels fulfilled in his role, likes his short commute, and is glad he now has a job that will help him work toward his financial savings goals.

"It has been an absolute pleasure working with Michael," said Simone, Store Director at Target. "I love his commitment to doing his best. He is doing well so far."

With encouragement from his Employment Specialist, Michael decided to be transparent about his disability and accommodation needs. Michael's self-advocacy and Target's commitment to inclusion set the bar for openness and acceptance in the workplace.





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Quarters for Kyle

KL Vending Services



Kyle, 34, has neurodevelopmental disorder and autism. After years of working in kitchens at restaurants like Wendy's, Chili's and Texas Roadhouse, he became the first person in Utah to take advantage of a state program that helps people with disabilities attain self-employment — and he's getting his business off the ground with a boost from a Wildcat MicroFund grant.

KL Vending Services, LLC, began in April 2023. Kyle runs the business along with his mother, Lisa, and his job coach, Jory Cross. They focus on quarter-operated machines that vend gum, candy and toys.

"The reason we came up with vending is because Kyle loves keys," Lisa said. "Ever since he was a kid, he's carried around a big set of keys."

By the end of 2023, he had installed machines at four different businesses in Ogden and surrounding towns. "We want to stay local and support and work with local businesses," Lisa said.

While Lisa manages the books, Kyle and Cross handle the vending work. Cross is a job coach at the Ogden office of Community Options. He spends four hours a week with Kyle collecting money and restocking machines, and also meeting with local businesses to find new locations.

"I want to help grow this the way Kyle wants, and it's been going very well," Cross said. "This is all about Kyle — he is what will make this business grow."

Kyle is also happy with how it's going: "I like being the boss," he said. "I want to have a great business."

Written by Jen Wright of Weber State University