



Communications Office

News Release

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Determination and Drive Help Young Man with a Disability Find a Job with Disney

Orlando, FL – The next time you're shopping at the World of Disney in Downtown Disney, that friendly face at the cash register could be **Edwin Diaz**. Edwin, who has cerebral palsy and a mild intellectual disability, is thrilled to have his first "official" job. "Working at Disney is a good fit for me, and I'm happy to be here," he says.

Edwin worked hard and volunteered long hours to get where he is today. He put a lot of energy into finding a job, even though he was caught not only in the high unemployment rate for younger workers, but also in the higher unemployment rate for people who have a disability. Fortunately for him, he had Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) on his side.

Edwin first came to VR in high school as a transition student. Against all odds, he graduated high school with a regular diploma. He met with his counselor, and they decided he should attend Mid Florida Tech, where he majored in marketing, merchandising, and parts operations. VR helped pay for his tuition and books. After he graduated with honors from Mid Florida Tech, Edwin began looking for a job, but there wasn't a lot out there for a young man with a certificate and a disability. Employers were reluctant to give the young man who uses a walker for balance a chance.

When VR counselor Naseana Francis took over Edwin's case, she sat down with him and, after reviewing his case together, they updated his plan for employment to better match his abilities. "He's very professional," says Naseana. "He just needed to be given the opportunity to show he could do the job."

Edwin worked with his job coach, Susan Bronislowski, with Hands On Education, on his interviewing and job skills. She encouraged Edwin to volunteer with different companies, so he could have some job experience to include on his resume. Edwin volunteered at Florida Hospital Celebration and Florida Hospital Kissimmee for two years.

Susan then set up a 12-week On-the-Job Training with Give Kids the World, where Edwin scheduled volunteers and did office and computer work for the organization. Unfortunately, at the end of the training, there weren't enough funds to hire Edwin. He continued to help out at the organization, because he enjoyed the people and wanted to stay active.

And then he landed the interview at Disney. They were very impressed that Edwin had been volunteering for more than two years and offered him a job, but not just any job. They wanted to find a good

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fit for Edwin where the bus could drop him off, he could get to work easily, and he could use his training and job skills. That's why you'll see Edwin smiling as he runs the cash register at the World of Disney store in Downtown Disney.

The company didn't need to make any accommodations for Edwin so he could do his job. He uses his walker at the cash register to keep his balance and for safety reasons, but that is the only adjustment that was needed.

Naseana is very happy that Edwin is working at Disney. "They have a great worker," she says. "I hope he is able to grow with Disney. Disability or not, I think he has shown that he can do anything he puts his mind to, and I hope Disney can capitalize on that."

Susan agrees. "He's a great guy. He never said 'no.' He never said 'I can't do it,'" she says. "He did everything we asked him to do, and now there's no holding him back." Edwin hopes to stay with the company and move up in the future. For now, he's happy to work and volunteers for extra hours, if he is needed.

Florida's Vocational Rehabilitation program is committed to helping people with disabilities become part of America's workforce. Our employer-focused website, **FLJobConnections.com**, allows businesses to search at no charge for employees who are ready to go to work, as well as to post available jobs. VR has 80 offices across Florida, and last year helped 6,071 Floridians with significant disabilities find or keep a job. For more information about VR and its services, call (800) 451-4327 or visit **Rehabworks.org**.

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REMINDER FOR MEDIA--When reporting on stories about people with disabilities, remember to use language that puts the person first, rather than the disability. For example, use phrases such as "people with disabilities" (instead of "the disabled") and "person who uses a wheelchair" (rather than "wheelchair bound"); and "people with a mental illness" (rather than "the mentally ill").