

# One Man's Journey to Find Employment Amidst a Global Pandemic

*How People with disAbilities and Learning Differences Are Finding Gainful Employment In A Challenging Job Market*

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*Robert*

Finding employment in the midst of a global pandemic is tough for everyone, but for those with learning differences or special needs, the challenges of job hunting are often compounded. Robert, a vibrant 28-year-old man, always desired to work and to have a full life. Until last year he filled his days with Adult Education and Karate classes at Family Resource Associates (FRA). In 2019, when FRA partnered with Monmouth Medical Center to launch Project SEARCH, Phill Duck, FRA Program Director, knew Robert was a good candidate for the program. “We

recognized Robert as a person who always showed initiative and a willingness to help, so when we set out to recruit interns for Project SEARCH, he immediately came to mind,” said Duck.

Robert graduated from a year's internship training at Project SEARCH in June 2020, at the height of the global pandemic. According to Robert, “I learned how to organize my workspace and day. It's important to be friendly and keep my work area neat. I also learned that you have to stay with the task until it's done. I was able to do many practice job interviews and worked with several different supervisors. The different jobs helped me to learn what I liked to do.” Robert was assisted to apply for open positions, develop a resume, and was then prepped for interviews.

The persistence of Robert and the staff at FRA eventually paid off, with Robert landing his first job at BJ's in Oakhurst. Upon getting the position, FRA job coaches provided Robert with training until he learned all of the job responsibilities and tasks so that he could complete them independently and be a benefit to his employer. Today, Robert is enjoying his success and is working twenty hours per week. When asked about his favorite parts of having a job, Robert said, “I like to meet new people and see people that I know from school and church. Sometimes people need help loading their purchases into their cars. I enjoy doing that. When I come home I have something to talk to my family about. Everyone at BJ's is nice, and sometimes they have

special snacks for us. I'm glad to be able to go to work regularly and get paid!" To ensure success in his job, an FRA job coach visits Robert a couple hours each month.

Robert offered a bit of advice to anyone considering applying for an internship at Monmouth Medical Center Project SEARCH. "The people at MMC Project SEARCH were nice and helpful, everyone cares about you. It's a nice place to learn and work. The classroom was great and Monmouth Medical Center was an interesting place. You'll learn a lot about what you like to do and about getting a job with this program."

FRA offers Possibilities for those with disabilities. About Family Resource Associates Family Resource Associates, Inc. (FRA) is a 501(c)(3) in Monmouth County helping children, adolescents and people of all ages with disabilities to reach their fullest potential. FRA connects individuals to independence through specialized therapies and advanced technology. Acknowledging the powerful influence of the family, we remain committed to them by offering both support and education. FRA assists individuals of all ages who have developmental delays or disabilities as well as acquired disabilities. FRA provides home-based early intervention for infants, therapeutic recreation programs, pre-vocational and educational classes for adults, EmployAbility training and job coaching, along with family and sibling support groups. TECHConnection, a signature program of FRA, leverages technology to help increase, maintain or improve the capabilities of individuals with disabilities as a result of accident, injury, illness or aging as well as related issues affecting hearing, vision, reading or mobility. To learn more, visit [frainc.org](http://frainc.org). Federal Tax ID # 22-2285850 -NJ Charity Registration # CH0232800

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