



ARRA SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM - 2009 ALEXANDER BENN'S SUCCESS STORY

In April of 2009 Cheryl Ketchens, a South Central Michigan Works! (SCMW) Career Manager, contacted her local Michigan Rehabilitation Services office regarding a collaborative partnership to provide summer employment services for youth with disabilities. Ms. Ketchens met with Rehabilitation Counselor Sheila Eder. Sheila was eager to begin the collaboration with SCMW! and she began compiling a list of potential candidates for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Summer Youth Program.

Among the names from Ms. Eder's List was a seventeen (17) year old young man by the name of Alexander (Alex) Benn. Ms. Ketchens met with Alex the latter part of May, after his graduation from high school. He had very little in the way of work history due to his age and full-time student status for the past four years. Alex's English, Reading and Mathematics assessments indicated that he was post high school in all areas.

Alex immediately struck Ms. Ketchens as being thoughtful and well spoken, additionally he was very polite and manner-able. He was eager to begin summer employment and earn some money before beginning school in the fall. Alex said that he planned to attend Jackson Community College in September. With the above attributes and skills one could only imagine a very bright future for this tenacious and bright young man despite his numerous physical limitations.

Alex's physical disabilities classify him as a Quadriplegic. Most of us can scarcely imagine such challenges. Yet this courageous young man of a mere seventeen years of age has learned to live quite admirably with his physical limitations. He does so without complaining or asking for special privileges. Instead he chooses to be treated like everyone else. Ms. Ketchens offered to deliver Alex's ARRA Summer Work Experience Checks to him rather than have him come in and out of the SCMW! Service Center each time. Alex accepted my offer to deliver occasionally but chose to pick up his check as often as possible.

Alex successfully completed his ten week ARRA Summer WEP Assignment. He started at Michigan Rehabilitation Services and ended at Goodwill Industries. Alex worked from June 22, 2009 to August 28, 2009 and earned minimum wage (\$7.40/hr). He began classes at Jackson Community College on Monday, August 31st. His work-site supervisors, Sheila Eder of MRS and Kim Parker of Goodwill had high praise for Alex and the clerical work that he performed. Alex embodies the true meaning of SUCCESS!!