

Career Development Service Success Story

Anthony Acovski



Just two years ago, Sylvia Acovski feared the worst for her son, Anthony.

"I never thought my son could have a life," she explains.

"I was afraid he was always going to be alone."

Anthony is 22 years old, but his mother says he functions at a second-grade level. He is mentally challenged, and his disability affects both his speech and motor skills. To make matters worse, Anthony had become depressed and frustrated with the public school he attended.

When his parents heard about the Goodwill L.I.F.E. Academy, it sounded too good to be true. But after hearing great things from some of the other parents at the school, they decided to enroll him at Goodwill's charter school.

After one year at the L.I.F.E. Academy, Anthony was invited into the school's transition program, which helps students acquire the skills they need to hold down a job. As part of the program, students participate in 2-week paid internships. For Anthony, that was all he needed.

"Once he got that first paycheck, he thrived," explains L.I.F.E. Academy Principal Lynn Potter. "We really saw him blossom last year."

This June, Anthony was one of the proud graduates of the Class of 2008. "When he was three years old, I thought he'd never even walk or talk," says Sylvia. "I'm the happiest mom in the world."

But Anthony's story doesn't end there.

Three days a week, Anthony wakes up early, puts on a uniform, and reports to Goodwill in North Fort Myers, where he is now employed as a sorter at Goodwill Secure Shred.

Goodwill created its Secure Shred document destruction service in 2007 to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Southwest Florida.

Anthony's progress is monitored by a Goodwill transition specialist, who assists him in understanding his job responsibilities, and who acts as a liaison between Anthony and his supervisor.

"Some of our employees have been unsuccessful in other jobs because of their disabilities," explains Pat Smith, Goodwill's Director of Donor Development. "Here, we understand their needs and can accommodate them. At the same time, we also expect our employees to grow, and we hold them to task, just as any other employer would do."

For Sylvia, just seeing her son leave for work every morning brings a tear to her eyes. "Anthony finally has something to be proud of," she says. "You try for so long, for so many years, and you face so many closed doors. When you find something like this, it's like there's a miracle."