

Career Development Service Success Story

Ryan Baker



When Ryan Baker's mother became ill; he dropped out of high school to care for his mom and his 14-year-old sister. The family was barely managing financially—his mother was too ill to work, his sister too young, and Ryan had trouble finding a job as an 18-year-old with a slight learning disability and no high school diploma.

In July of 2007, Ryan turned to Goodwill Employment Consultant Maryjane Nickerson. She recalls that he was quiet, shy, and polite. Maryjane asked him what kind of work he'd like to do, and he responded with one word: "Anything."

That day, Maryjane took Ryan to visit a new business in the area, the Smoothie King. She met with the owners, explained Goodwill's programs, and introduced them to Ryan. His good manners immediately won them over.

Ryan trained for a few weeks before the store opened, and once the Smoothie King was in business, Maryjane visited him regularly.

"He was doing great," she says. Even after a car accident left his family without any transportation, he still reported to work, getting rides with his co-workers.

Everything seemed to be going well for Ryan, until one day, nearly three months into his new position, when he let his personal struggles get in the way of his job. In a moment of frustration, he let his youth and inexperience show, and was rude to a customer. The store owners let him go, and Ryan was too embarrassed to tell Maryjane for more than a week. "Ryan knew that what he did was wrong," adds Maryjane. "He was very sorry."

Jobs were getting scarce and Maryjane had trouble finding another position for Ryan. She finally went back to Smoothie King, and asked the owners to give him one more chance.

After some hesitation, they agreed, and Ryan returned to his former job-- a little wiser from the tough lesson he'd learned.

In the short time since Ryan Baker came to Goodwill at the age of 18, he's grown up quickly. Today, Ryan is the Assistant Manager at that same Smoothie King. He has his own apartment, his own car, and is engaged to be married. Ryan's experience with Goodwill's Career Development Services proves that persistence pays off—and that everyone deserves a second chance.

