

Success Stories: Vocational Rehabilitation



Richard Werry



OCCUPATION:
Soil Conservation Technician

VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Specialized wheelchair lift from Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT)
- Benefits planning with Utah Working Incentive Program (UWIPS)
- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Academic training program support
- Job development and placement services

Richard “Rick” Werry came to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in 2009 after suffering a worksite accident that left him quadriplegic. Rick needed assistive technology to become mobile enough to attend training and restoration activities. He had a vehicle but was unable to drive it because he had no way to access it with his wheelchair.

Rick worked with his VR counselor and the Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT) to purchase hand controls and a wheelchair lift for his truck. This specialized lift raises his camper shell, lifts his wheelchair out and lowers it to where he can transfer from truck to chair. UCAT would continue to be a source of knowledge and support throughout his time with VR.

In addition to assistive technology, Rick also needed vocational direction that better suited his new normal. Before his accident, he was a plumber’s apprentice, but he could no longer do this work. With the help of Career Exploration Services and VR counseling, he was able to

utilize his previous experience and transferable skills to set a vocational goal of becoming a draftsman. Rick attended Snow College and did well in his classes until the drafting program was discontinued, forcing him to begin a different career track.

Rick began part-time work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and was eventually offered full-time work if he completed his education in a related field of study. With the possible job opportunity, Rick switched his degree to biology and was offered a full-time job as a soil conservation technician with the U.S. Conservation Services (NRCS-USDA). Through his new employer, Rick is able to continue working toward completing his degree.

When he received his full-time job, the Utah Work Incentive Program (UWIPS) provided benefits planning to help Rick understand how his new full-time work would affect his Social Security benefits. With the collaboration of VR services and programs, and through his persistence and diligence, Rick was successful in achieving his employment goal.

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