



Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) is proud to share a young man's story. This is a true testament to the collaboration of great partnership between students, parents, businesses, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the school district. Described as an unhappy and non-compliant student by his mom, the young man was struggling with classes and on track to drop out of high school. He shared he was failing almost every class and was struggling before he was referred to the HEART Program – a work-based learning experience. Here, he was able to learn hands-on and gain skills in the building trades. No longer was he dreading school, but instead feeling “happy and relaxed.” With the additional support in a program designed to empower young people, he successfully completed two years in this program and truly feels that without this he would have dropped out of high school.

Following graduation in 2019, he obtained various jobs in the area of painting. This had been his favorite part of the work-based learning experience. Through IVRS business partnerships, they were able to secure him an interview with Gronen Properties and he was hired immediately. He started an apprenticeship five days after the interview. This company does large-project restoration and rehabilitation projects, and he would have the opportunity to use many of the skills he learned.

After three months of working at Gronen Properties, the supervisor reached out to his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to discuss how the business could best help him be successful, given his need for repetitive tasks and supervisory direction. Gronen Properties shared that painting may not be a great fit due to the struggles he has with organization and independent task completion. The company asked for strategies to assist his learning style. Following a team meeting with the business and IVRS, a strategy was developed, and it was determined that this young man really enjoyed masonry tasks. This partnership allowed for his continued success and a plan for providing routine tasks, a task list and masonry jobs was put in place.

As of December of 2019, he has continued to do well in his work and continues to work with Gronen Properties as an apprentice with their masonry team. Gronen Properties' willingness to take on students with some challenges, work with their strengths, collaborate with partners to continue to improve skills of employees and reach out when struggling with employee

issues is a great testament to their dedication to success. Although Gronen Properties does not utilize a registered apprenticeship program, they do have an internal apprenticeship program within their organization.

The young man wrote a letter of thanks to all those who helped him along his journey – “I want to also thank ... IVRS. Having a team that is supportive and has your back has made a huge difference for my future. I just wanted to thank all of you for making a difference in my life!”



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