

Creating **BIG CHANGE** for Individuals with Disabilities

Building FULL Lives (BFL) is a project of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. BFL provides training and technical assistance to support organizations in moving from a segregated to integrated service model that flexibly supports both a person's integrated employment and community living goals. BFL provides services and supports that are **individualized, full of choices, and built around the dreams and aspirations of the individual.**

Demarious Foster's Building FULL Lives Story.

Demarious Foster is 21 years old, lives in Milwaukee, and has been participating in Goodwill of Southeastern Wisconsin program for five years.

PRIOR TO PARTICIPATING IN THE BFL PROGRAM

- Attended Goodwill's work center Monday through Friday from 8:00-3:00.
- Lived at home with his mom, and rarely went out, with exception of outings from time to time with his brother
- Did not know how to use public transportation so relied on Goodwill, private transit services, or family to get around.



- Did not know how to use the phone, and was very fearful (along with his mom) that he may get lost using the bus and not know how to call for help
- After two years at the work center Demarious began volunteering at Habitat for Humanity
- Applied for DVR services in 2015 and was working with Goodwill staff to find a job, but did not have one yet.

Building FULL Lives is based upon the following values:

- **Community participation:** People are involved in a growing network of relationships; this is a relationship network beyond paid staff and disability professionals.
- **Respect:** People are respected and valued by others persons in the community, not just paid staff.
- **Competent Contribution:** People are assisted to understand their gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities; and to use these personal assets to give back to others.
- **Paid employment:** Nothing inhibits self-determination and the building of meaningful lives more than the poverty and isolation associated with a life of unemployment.
- **Choice:** People are assisted to make as many choices about their day as possible, including both small choices (e.g. what to wear) and big choices (e.g. where to work).

AFTER TO PARTICIPATING IN BFL PROGRAM

■ Demarious joined a BFL “Community CONNECT” group with 2 other people who lived close to him and shared similar goals and interests. One staff person provided them with support.

■ He and the other group members identified a “meet-up place” which was the Wauwatosa Library, from which they would leave to do personal and community Discovery from 1pm to 4pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

■ Demarious worked with staff to develop his personal goals for being involved in the group, which were: 1). to improve his problem-solving abilities in the community and 2). To establish relationships outside the work center.

■ Goodwill staff, began working creatively with the small group on problem solving and navigation. For example, one day the staff person had the group work together to take the bus from the library to the mall and follow three clues to find her in the mall. Phone tracking software ensured that she knew where the participants were in case they needed help. Demarious learned how to send text updates to his mom and how to send a group message to the other participants in the Community CONNECT group.

■ After less than 6 months in the “Community CONNECT” group, Demarious learned how to use a smart phone and ride the city bus independently. He recently demonstrated his problem-solving skills when he got lost on the bus. Rather than jumping in to save him, his mom watched his location tracker and waited for him to figure out his route home on his own.

■ In November of 2016, Demarious was hired at his first paid, community job by Pick-n-Save grocery store. He works 4-5 hours per day 2-3 days per week, with the plan to increase his hours. What is he earning?

■ He continues to be involved with the Community CONNECT group on Tuesdays and Thursdays when his work schedule allows and he will text the group if he is not able to join. The members of the group have begun planning weekend activities together and continue to go to the \$5 Movie Tuesdays regularly.

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Community CONNECT has helped me become more familiar and independent in my community.

Demarious Foster

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Community CONNECT is a great way to get out and enjoy my free time. Gives me ideas of where to hang out with my friends.

Demarious Foster

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If you want more information about the Building FULL Lives projects, contact Ann Sievert at 608-267-9897 or ann.sievert@wisconsin.gov.