

# Jermaine Collins

Jermaine has been working for Goodwill retail stores for 10 years. He started working at a store in Brookfield and then landed his current job as a baler at a Goodwill Donation Center. Jermaine is very skilled at his job. While most employees can do 6 bales a shift, Jermaine can do 7 or more.

“They gave me a raise cause I was doing good. I was getting the job done. Knocking out jobs and getting it done. Put me on a project and I get that done, and put me on another project and I got that done.” As his experience has grown, so have his responsibilities. “They got me doing everything,” says Jermaine proudly.

Jermaine works 4-hour shifts 3 days a week and has become independent on the job, needing only weekly 30-minute checks-ins from his job coach.

Outside of work, Jermaine manages the household due to his mother’s chronic illness. He helps with cleaning, shopping, paying bills, looking after his nephew, and caring for the family cat. Jermaine and his support team are proud of his employment accomplishments. They can see he is deeply respected by those who know him for his work ethic and loyalty to his family but they also recognize there is a lot more to life than just work. Jermaine did not have many outlets for fun or hanging out with friends. To expand his horizons, Goodwill connected him to their Beyond Work services to explore his interests, meet new people, and get connected to his community.



Goodwill started Beyond Work after being involved in the Wisconsin Board for Developmental Disabilities’ Building Full Lives Initiative. Beyond Work uses a discovery process with people to identify their interests and goals. Once these are identified, Beyond Work connects people to opportunities in their community. Beyond Work services focus on broadening people’s social networks and helping them gain life skills.

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After learning more about Jermaine’s interests and goals, the Beyond Work Community Connector connected him with two other young men involved with Beyond Work who have similar interests. They began exploring their community by visiting local parks, fitness centers, and malls, and they learned how to use public transportation. They quickly discovered they enjoyed going to movies and playing video games at GameStop together.



At first, the Beyond Work staff coordinated a weekly movie or get together at the mall. She would meet them at the theatre or mall to problem solve any issues that popped up and to help them get to know each other. Overtime, she began to fade support. Now, she just checks in with them once a week for 15 minutes. In fact, Jermaine and one of the other participants recently made plans on their own to go to a Brewers game. “I was so happy to hear [they] are making plans outside of the program,” the Beyond Work Community Connector said.

Jermaine likes sports and wants to be active. Over the years since leaving the facility-based program, he lost touch with his friends and he stopped being involved with Special Olympics. So, his team helped him reconnect as a first step. With support from the Beyond Work Community Connector, Jermaine was able to get a physical exam and complete the application process to rejoin Special Olympics.

Jermaine participates in the 100-meter dash, a relay and the javelin. He got second place in javelin at regionals and earned an invitation to state. Connecting to a sports team has been “So positive for him in the short amount of time he’s been doing it. It’s been a great avenue to interact with others and to participate in sports that he enjoys. And he’s really good!” said the staff from Goodwill.

What’s next for Jermaine? Jermaine is connecting to more opportunities and hopes to begin flag football in the near future.



For more information about the Building Full Lives initiative, visit <https://wi-bpdd.org/index.php/building-full-lives/> or contact Molly Cooney at 608-266-0266.