

November 2020



Focused on Ability

My name is Richard Brissette. I have worked and lived in Madison for the last 30 years. With National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October I wanted to be featured in What's the Word to help celebrate my 30th anniversary working for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue!

I was born in Danbury Connecticut in 1970 and was diagnosed with Mild Autism Spectrum disorder at a young age. I have some issues with reasoning comprehension which made school difficult growing up but even though school was sometimes challenging I still had an overall good experience with school. I graduated from Bethel High School in 1988 and was so thankful for the friendly atmosphere throughout my time there. During High School I was a teacher aid which helped me build some basic professional skills that would carry on through the rest of my life. Shortly after graduation I started working at Grolier Book Publishing for almost a year, until I ended up moving to Wisconsin with my family.

Working a job was always something I knew I would have but when I moved to Wisconsin I knew I would need some help finding a job rather than trying to do it on my own. I worked with a job placement counselor who was a huge help! They helped me get a job as a Limited Term Employee or LTE at the WI Department of Transportation. It didn't take long for my manager to realize that I had exceptional math and computer skills so after 11 months I was transferred to my current position at the Department of Revenue where I work doing data entry and clerical tasks.

I love my job and after working there for 30 years I have some great routines. Every day I start my day by saying hello or connecting with my coworkers on some level. One of my favorite parts of my job is being able to connect with people in the office. I moved to a new condo a couple of years ago for a lot of reasons but it is so much closer to the office so I can easily walk the 15 minutes it takes to get there. Living in Wisconsin makes it hard to walk year-round so sometimes I will take the bus or get a ride from my roommate.

For fun I enjoy cooking healthy meals, mini-golf and going to local high school football games! I attend Badger Camp in Prairie Du Chien and it blends two of my favorite things together; hanging out with people and traveling! They help plan group trips all over the Midwest and the US in general. I have some

great people in my life that help support me and one of the things that helps is getting a monthly newsletter of events around the state that I can participate in, like the Autism Conference which I've been going to since 2007. I also started going to the Self-Determination Conference (SDC) in 2017 which has been great and since it was virtual this year it prompted me to get my Facebook account setup so I can keep in touch with everyone I know through the conference. I missed being able to go to the Kalahari in the Wisconsin Dells, which is where both the Autism and Self-Determination conferences are hosted, because of the pandemic. The Wisconsin Dells area is one of the places I go to for relaxing and fun. At each conference I try to take time to head over to Pirates Cove for a game of mini golf!

Working has allowed me to have fun, travel and even buy my own condo! It's an important part of my life and has led to me meeting so many interesting and nice people just in our office. I think we should take the Dis out of disability and focus on people's abilities to move all people forward in leading a Self-Determined life!