

Vermont National Direct Support Professional Recognition Celebration

9-12-14

Vermont State House, Montpelier, VT

Speech by: Paul Betz

I am here to honor a good friend plus a very dedicated support worker who helps me in all aspects of my life. Her name is Marita Hartnett. She has been supporting me at Walmart for 5 years now. And the reason why I say she is a good worker is whatever Walmart tells me to do she realizes she has to help me to do that. To me she's helping me to keep my employment. Particularly for me this is important because for 14 years I didn't have any real employment and I want to stay employed as long as I can.

Marita is very kind. She has knowledge about lots of things and she's very good at taking one on one instructions. And she can get along with anybody. She is also flexible with what comes up in my every-day life in different situations.

One way she has helped me go for my dreams is by helping me find out about how to go about buying my own trailer which I still want to do. She is good at helping me figure out my finances so that I have enough money to do what I want to do. She supports me in going on mini vacations to the casino which is something I do for enjoyment but without her being able to drive and being willing and able that would not be possible.

Since we work at Wally World (short for Wal-Mart) all the time people or customers they will come in and start speaking to Marita instead of me and she will turn and say back to them, 'he is able to speak and communicate for himself.' After she says that to people they don't focus so much on her and they end up focusing on me especially when I tell them I have almost been working at Walmart for almost 9 years.

She helped me put to rest my grandmother and without her that would not have been possible for me to go to physically. And the reason why I say that is because the first two funerals I went to in my whole life was my birth mother and my grandfather and both those funerals I tried to leave the room. I didn't deal with those two well but with Marita at my grandmother's funeral I didn't do that.

The comment that me and Marita get all the time from people that come in the store will just randomly ask her 'are you his mother?' And when we say no they also ask me, 'is she your wife?' To these questions we always reply, 'no we are just good friends.' and the reason why I am saying that is they then say, 'well you guys look really good together.'