

Success Story- Steven Foelske



Steven Foelske- outside of Cardinal Commons at Wartburg, with Sara Spieker DEI and Emily Boyd TRADE not pictured Krista Monroe Voc Rehab.

Steve worked at Terex in Waverly since 1978, when the plant in Waverly closed its doors and moved production to Kansas, Steven found himself seriously looking for a job. He had been through layoffs before as Terex had had multiple shorter term layoffs throughout Steve's 38 year career there, but this time there were no call backs.

A petition was filed for Terex to try to be approved for Trade, and Once Terex was approved for Trade Act benefits, there was a notice sent out to those folks affected by the shutdown, Steve attended that meeting and filled out his initial eligibility paperwork.

In September 2016 Steve was already working with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation working with Krista Monroe and came in to the Iowa Works office for an Unemployment meeting. It was at one of those meetings that he was referred to Sara Spieker for some different evaluations and assistance. He started to meet with Sara weekly to do job searches, assistance with his resume, computer review, and job seeking skills. He was also enrolled in the 30 hour computer class and completed that in December of 2016.

In October 2016 Emily Boyd met with him individually after the Trade meeting that presented everything that could potentially be utilized through the Trade Act. Steve shared that he was in the process of also working with Vocational Rehabilitation to be evaluated for a learning disability. He said he wasn't sure how that was going to turn out, but reading and comprehension is hard for him and takes a long time. We set up a meeting at the Dislocated Worker Transition Center at that time and our theme for getting through this difficult process became: "How do you eat an Elephant? One bite at a time!"

Meeting face to face weekly with Sara kept Steven very engaged in this whole process. As a team Sara, Emily, Steve and Krista constantly kept each other in the loop. Eventually we had Steve fill out consent to release information form and added his wife, Vicki to the mix, as she handles most of the paperwork and emails for him.

With all of the job applications Steven and Sara were doing and the interviews starting to roll in, Steven had interviews pretty much weekly, unfortunately most of them were only part time or were lower wages. Eventually Steve did accept one part time job through the Waverly-Shell Rock School District as a Substitute Custodian. He remains to be a prized employee with them and the department heads at the different school locations continues to argue over who gets to have him in their buildings more.

Even though he was working up to full time hours between the schools, he wasn't consistently hitting the 30 hours per week required for RTAA. So we kept looking and applying. Steve mentioned that he would like to be a school bus driver if possible

because if he was a driver for the Waverly schools and a custodian that would get him to that full time employment standard for RTAA through Trade.

Emily and Steve had a meeting about that and looked at what he would need to do to complete a training request for trade to pay for the CDL program at Hawkeye Community College with all the proper endorsements. Part of doing a training packet would mean that he had to take the NCRC so Sara and Emily worked together to set that up and applied for accommodations with ACT. We were approved for those requests and he got more time for each assessment and was able to have an audio DVD that would read the test to him. Emily partnered up with Steven Schwickerath to proctor that test on site at the DWTC for three weeks in a row in the classroom to eliminate all outside distractions possible.

Steven completed the NCRC in January 2017 and it was boxed up and sent back to ACT for scoring. We came to a standstill at the beginning of February when the scores were lost after they were returned for scoring. It sent Steve reeling, and was understandably upsetting, considering the anxiety he overcame in taking the assessment. Instead of giving up, Steve continued to stay focused and determined in finding a fulltime job, or begin training.

Meanwhile, Steve and Emily met to look at training options for that CDL. He was pretty apprehensive about that whole idea so Sara, Emily and Steve made an appointment with Celeste Turner at the Regional Transportation Center with Hawkeye to come take a tour and play with the simulators. Once that decision was made Steve completed a TRA Waiver because if he was able to do it, he wouldn't be able to start the program until June when the Custodial job at Waverly schools ended for the school year.

We learned that we should probably have shot video of this because while Steve was a great diver in the bus simulator, Emily managed to run over some trees and more than one stop sign, and Sara nearly ran over a garbage man and a police car. It was the best way to find out what he may be getting into if he did decide to go forward with the training in June. Emily helped him by printing out much of the information that would be required for a school packet and held that in his file until closer to that time. Walking out of that tour Steve said: "That was pretty fun, I don't think I would do too bad with that."

Steve was still applying for jobs and getting more interviews, and in turn became much more confidant in that process and kept incredibly meticulous notes in his own version of short hand. In late March he got a call to interview for a full time custodial position at Wartburg College in Waverly, just minutes from his house. After that interview they offered him a full time job with full benefits. He has accepted that position. Emily and Sara went to visit Steve at Wartburg on Wed. April 26th to sit down and capture his success story. He treated us to a surprise too, we finally got to meet his wife, who shared her perspective on this whole process and thanked us both several times for all the help we have been.

Emily had pre-filled in much of the RTAA paperwork for this occasion and got the needed dates and signatures from Steve for that to begin as soon as he receives his first paycheck. Steve then took us on a tour of his building and walked us through what his daily routine is. He is in a building with many of the guys on the wrestling team- and he knows the coach well having volunteered with the Waverly schools wrestling programs for many years and has quite the collection of statistics and memorabilia from that endeavor. Steve has also become a voice in the community with the teachers and students he has gotten to interact with as a custodian first in the Waverly schools and now at Wartburg. He speaks with students about overcoming obstacles and disabilities.

Steve ended our tour that day with the following quote: "The help is out there but you have to be willing to reach out for it."