

## **DVR Helps Client's Dream Job Come True (continued)**

The organization has a wide variety of animals including a kangaroo, a coatimundi, a sloth, a bearded dragon, a red-tailed boa constrictor, an African pigmy hedgehog, an African bush baby, and many smaller mammals. Some of the animals were rescued from home situations because the owners were no longer able to care for them. All of the animals have names: Sid the sloth, Izzy the green iguana, Gizmo the sugar glider, Jack the kangaroo, and Einstein the eclectus parrot are among the group.

Carrie always wanted to work with animals and dreamed of being a zookeeper at a young age. Carrie is a third generation Girl Scout and a lifetime member. Through Girl Scouts she realized her passion was to work with animals. She recalls being with her mother at the zoo as a child, watching an animal trainer, and telling her mother "that's what I want to do." Carrie's dream job came true with the assistance of the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Carrie Johnston came to DVR while in high school as part of our Transition services program for students. She needed our help because she has central auditory processing disorder (CAPD). According to the Auditory Processing Foundation, symptoms of CAPD include the reduced or impaired ability to discriminate, recognize or comprehend complex sounds, such as those used in words, even though the person's hearing is normal. Carrie said her CAPD affects her memory, speech, and hearing.

Carrie said even though she has a disability, she has learned to adapt and tries not to let her disability get in the way of life. She advocates for herself and others with disabilities. "It's about respect and understanding for others," said Carrie. She has also adapted her teaching style and lesson plans so that people with disabilities can participate in all aspects of her programs.

Carrie has a Bachelor of Science degree in Captive Wildlife Care and Education from Unity College in Maine. Her education was focused on science, animal health, exhibit design, animal training, biology, wildlife conservation, the environment, and how to write lesson plans to teach. While a student, she gained a lot of experience working with animals through volunteering. She has volunteered at the Smithsonian Zoo in Washington, D.C., gaining experience with gorillas and orangutans. She also gained working experience with over 40 species of birds, small mammals, and primates as an Animal Care Intern at the Palm Beach Zoo in Florida.

DVR has assisted Carrie in all aspects of career development. From transitioning from special education classes in high school, to college level courses, providing books and technology needed for class, encouragement through the times of struggle, and post-graduation employment support. "I would have never been able to get through college without the support from DVR."

A positive attitude has also helped her succeed. "Don't ever give up on your dream, no matter how many people tell you otherwise, or you think it's too hard," said Carrie. "I had so many people tell me I would change my dream or I could never achieve it." She

added “Just keep going, stay positive, focus on people who believe in you, and most importantly believe in yourself.” Carrie noted that she has a supportive family who has helped her along the way. She also credits her VR Counselor, Barbara Mallory, stating that she was very supportive. “Barbara is one of my favorite people, I love her! She has a real passion for helping students and you can see that she cares for people,” said Carrie.

Carrie is looking forward to growth opportunities in her current position at Barn Hill Preserve. The organization is currently raising funds to build a permanent facility so they can offer different types of educational programs and events. Look for Barn Hill Preserve this summer at locations near the Delaware Beaches including Golf Down Under, Jungle Jim’s, Summer Salts Cafe, Harpoon Hanna’s, Fracture Prune, and Tidepool Toys & Games. They will also be at the Rope Walk in Ocean City. For more information about Barn Hill Preserve, visit their website or [Facebook page](#).

