

Jennifer's story

Jennifer: My name is Jennifer Allshouse. I have a nine year-old daughter named Haley. In my life, the biggest barrier would have to be my own self. I was very self-destructive for a little while there which got me into some trouble. I had just finished up a five-year prison sentence. I was out on work release and I was staying in a halfway house and it was right next to the Fairview location, and all the women in the house said, "oh, we do the Goodwill thing, we do the Goodwill thing" and I was like "I don't want to do the Goodwill thing." But, I decided to enter into the ReEntry Program and that's where I met my ReEntry counselor, David Mirambeaux, an amazing man, very good at his job, very good at his job.

David Mirambeaux, Goodwill-Easter Seals ReEntry Counselor: One of the things that made me successful at doing what I do with her and what the participants I work with - I am an ex-convict. I did six years in the penitentiary so I know what it was like coming back into the community for her. I saw the fear and I remembered what my fear was like.

Jennifer: I wanted to do the auto mechanics class and he said "no, you should do the construction one - there's better opportunity" and I was like, "oh, my gosh, I can't do construction. But, I decided to do it anyways and it's turned out to be the best thing ever.

Craig Chapman, Goodwill-Easter Seals Lead Career Specialist: So, as a Career Specialist, we don't meet our students until about week 6 of our 12 week program. I meet all my students at that time including Jennifer and you know everyone's kind of starry-eyed and doesn't really know what's going on with the program quite yet. Jennifer was no different. She lacked a lot of confidence - but that changed in the end.

Jennifer: When I entered into the construction training program, every single person that I met that was staff there they were friendly. They didn't treat me like a criminal. They didn't treat me like an ex-con. They didn't treat me like a girl that doesn't know how to do this stuff. It was the positive support that I needed that I didn't have anywhere else in my life that I got from everybody consistently that really helped give me that extra drive to keep going - to believe that I could do it.

Scott Coombs, Ames Construction foreman: You know, a lot of guys in this business that have been here five, 10 years and you know she catches on so fast that it's like having a journeyman sitting next to you working.

Jennifer: When I found out that I was gonna be featured on the Department of Labor *Apprenticeship Quarterly* I was absolutely ecstatic. I thought it was the coolest thing in the whole world, because then I could show people "you know, hey, this is where it came from but this is what I'm doing now.

Text on screen: Jennifer is one of only five women who are pile drivers in the state of Minnesota.

David Mirambeaux: She attributes a lot of her success to the ReEntry program because of the mentorship that she received and because of all the services that we offer.

Jennifer: Being able to take care of my daughter on my own is something I never really thought that I could do. It absolutely means the world to me to be there and to know that she will be safe when she's with me - that she will be taken care of when she's with me. I never imagined that my life could be this great. An amazing, incredible journey.