

Literacy for Life
CVC Code 04019
Derek's Story
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Derek's Story

Derek Thomas confided to a friend at church that he needed to improve his reading and writing skills. He chose the right person—a former Literacy for Life tutor—who referred him to our program. Derek made an appointment and enrolled at Literacy for Life on April 10, 2013.



Now 21 years old, Derek was born in Colorado and spent his childhood moving from place to place, usually staying in one location for weeks or months, rarely as long as a year. His parents did not prioritize his education, and he attended school for a total of only three or four years. When he did attend, he felt disinterested and frustrated, which could perhaps be attributed to his now identified dyslexia. Ultimately, he left home and struck out on his own at the age of 14. He experienced brief periods of

homelessness over the years but was almost always able to find work and shelter thanks to his gifts of intelligence, resourcefulness, and pluck.

Derek had spent time in Williamsburg during his childhood and remembered it as a calm and steady place where he could now focus on improving himself. He moved to Williamsburg and found work at Chik-fil-A, where he was promoted to Kitchen Lead. He is now a Corporate Trainer at the restaurant Cook Out. Despite routinely working overtime, he manages to meet with his tutor twice a week and utilizes GED preparation software programs. He has been completely reliable about attending his sessions, always arriving early to spend extra time studying.

While Derek's comprehension skills and vocabulary are excellent, he struggles with writing and spelling. Derek's tutor, Jim McNail, reports that Derek has made "dramatic improvement" during their time together. Derek appreciates Jim's laid back attitude and the way in which Jim recognizes and points out Derek's accomplishments, no matter how small they are.

Derek's goals are to obtain his GED and enroll at Thomas Nelson Community College. Ultimately, he hopes to pursue a career in public service as a first responder. He also plans to study a foreign language so that he is better able to serve community members who speak limited English.

Derek's determination to overcome his difficult childhood is an inspiration to those around him. He is extremely grateful for the support offered by Literacy for Life and his tutor, Jim. Derek describes Literacy for Life as a motivating and friendly place where he always feels at home. For more information, LiteracyforLife.org (757-221-3325).