

Western Arkansas
The Best Measure of Success – Client Testimonies
ARRA 2009

The following letters are unedited and heartfelt testimonies from a few of our ARRA Summer 2009 Youth Clients.

Joseph “Tyler” Rice:

To WAEDA Staff:

I've learned a lot since I've been with the Boys & Girls Club program. One of the main things I've learned is to think of others before yourself. Kids come first. I also learned how to use the member tracking system and how to properly set up and run a room or activity such as gym, game room, tech lab, jungle room or multi -purpose room. A big thing I learned is that kids need a role model or a person to look up too. After working here this summer and volunteering for the last two years I learned I'm a role model to many young children, which has taught me to always be involved and to my best ability to comfort or help any child in need. When I walk through the double doors and get smothered in hugs and kids say "Hey Tyler" or "Will you play with me?" It makes me feel good inside to know that you make an impact on the life of the next generation. I would like to stay around the Boys & Girls Club because I have gotten to know everybody over the years and I've watched kids grow into matured young adults and I feel I helped in some way for that. It would be an honor if I could stay around whether I get paid for my work here or just being a volunteer. I am going to continue to help out at the Boys & Girls Club for as long as I am welcome. The Club is a second home to me and I would do anything for it because I know how much the Club has done for me. I've helped kids in many ways since I've been a part of the club family. I've helped teach sports, fundamentals, games of all sorts, how to tie shoes and even how to not be shy in front of people. I enjoy helping the kids with anything they need help with because some don't have anyone outside the Club to help them. So it gives me a lot of pride to say "I taught him or her that" or "I'll help you". But it's not only me, the kids have helped me also. Knowing that a child relies on me for help because he or she looks up to me, makes me feel like the greatest person anyone can be. It puts a smile on my face. Just knowing that I'm their friend. All in all I wouldn't leave no matter what happens because the Club has made me into who I am today.

John Wisdom:

To WAEDA Staff:

My name is John Wisdom and I have been working through WAEDA since June 15, 2009 at the City of Alma Water Department. My job at the Water Department is archiving and retention of current and internal records.

I work with 3 wonderful ladies and 2 awesome men 32 hours a week and enjoy every second of it. The environment is relaxed and a wonderful one to work in. My boss, is very understanding if I have to leave early for any reason at all, and open to any questions I may have, no matter how dumb I may think they are.

The other man I work with is the Operations Supervisor and a humorous guy. He is rarely in the office but when he is it is a blast talking to and working under him.

The three ladies I work with are wonderful coworkers. If I ask them something and they don't know the answer then they make sure to either ask someone or point me in the right direction to find out.

This program has given me the opportunity to learn many life lessons, two of which I am going to elaborate on. One of which is money management. I have learned how to prioritize purchases using the money from my check, how much money to set back for gas to and from work, which has opened my eyes to how much things cost. This program has also given me the chance to expand my social skills with strangers. There are over 4000 people in the City of Alma and most of them have city water. Having city water means having a water bill. On average, there are around 100 people that come into the office and pay their bill. I hear every one of them walk through the door and every now and then get to interact with them in some way.

This program has helped me and my family greatly. This job has given me the finances to have a little bit of freedom away from my family. I have the money to pay for gas to go to a friend's house, to the movies, and go to the mall if I so choose. This job has helped my family by giving me money to help with my portion of the insurance and given me the ability to pay for all of my vehicle expenses. It has also given me the money to help out with any other bills that my mom may need help with, although she won't ask for it.

I come from a lower class, single parent family of four. I live with my mom, younger brother and younger sister. My mother makes about \$6000 a year which isn't enough for four people to live off of and pay all bills on time. My sister is 15, and my brother is 11. Any extra money helps.

How I found out about WAEDA was actually through my mom. She was finishing her bus route for work and she saw one of the temporary signs for the summer work program. She called me and told me to check on it and I did. I filled out an application, turned it in, and got accepted. It was unanswered prayer that got answered. I started June 15, 2009 here at the City of Alma Water Department and hopefully will be here year around. Life has been hard for me and my family but I am still here and not in the hospital. God has been good to me and my family.

Cody Pledger:

The summer of 2009 was and is the summer of change in my life where I gain new skills and earn my first income to better provide for my schooling. But at first it seemed bleak. I had no job prospects and over a month passed that I had been back in my hometown while I waited out the summer. Many classifieds and weeks in, I see an ad from WAEDA, thanks to my mother.

The ad was in search of teens from 14-24 years of age looking for work. And after a few days of paperwork and trips to Van Buren later, I found myself on the phone with the future supervisor of my first job.

My job site was CSCDC (Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council) in Fort Smith. The site is actually a community action agency that helps low-income families and individuals with many things ranging from food, utility payments, to buying a house, weatherization, and much more. Weatherization is the department I worked in. It took some getting used to, taking the Fort Smith transit for the ride to and from work for the first time. I had never used the buses before and never knew how easy it is, if one knows where to go and where they are going.

I cannot remember exactly my first day, because I have learned and experienced so much since then, but I do remember feeling very out of place on many levels from inexperience to being one of the youngest people working there in the agency. But I was met with a couple of co-workers who turned out to be some of my closest friends in the agency. I got the chance to see how a real office works with multiple departments within.

The tasks I have learned there at the Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council have been greatly beneficial to my first job experience, work ethic and even self-confidence. I started out going to houses and learning the routines for home inspections within the Weatherization department. I would accompany the two house Auditors/Assessors as they write up houses to know what work needs to be done. I would carry their equipment, observe what they do, and learn how things work. I progressed to setting up a blower door for initial or final inspections.

A blower door is a frame and type of cover that fits into the front door of residences. Down at the bottom is a fan that we fit as well as a device that plugs into the fan and out the door to get a reading on how air-tight a house is. Basically, it runs 50 mph suction throughout the house to see where air is coming from windows, pipes, light switches, doors, and other places. The door is an integral part in inspections, so Auditors/Assessors know what to write by the reading as well as feeling where air comes from.

After a few weeks of learning the trade of materials in the shed, picking them up, going to houses, how to repair them, and everything else, I began to work in the office more inside the office as a Weatherization Assistant. I learned a whole new level of experience as I used the phone, took name/addresses, and messages as well as progressed to processing applications, entering data, filing, dealing with the clients in person, and making copies of papers and forms, of course.

Eventually, we hired a new assistant (I could have assumed the position myself, but I have to return to school) and I helped train her with what I learned. I was then the jack-of-all-trades in the agency and would help the other departments with any help that they needed. I also got to learn how the other departments run and got to restock the food pantry and help move the food from the warehouse to our agency.

Then, our groundskeeper/handyman in the agency had to get some minor surgery, so I needed to help out by assuming some of his janitorial duties throughout the agency until his return. Through the month and half I have been there, I truly believe I have learned a lot to aid me in my

future. I am still surprised at what all I have been able to do and accomplish while here. CSCDC has been a very warm and welcoming place and I have had the utmost pleasant experience working there, and, in fact, I have been nick-named the department's "Red-headed step-child," They want me back, too, when I get back in Fort Smith from school. My supervisor told me to request this place if I work with WAEDA again in the future.

Re-capping, for my first job in my life, having no previous experience, I believe that I have acquired some very useful experiences for the future when I am able to go into the workforce. I have gained much experience, new friends, and many cherished memories. I am deeply grateful to WAEDA and the CSCDC for the many wonderful times and blessings I have had this summer of 2009.

Chelsea Spangle:

7-29-09

To WAEDA Staff:

First and for most I would like to give thanks to WAEDA for providing me this opportunity. Working at the Senior Center has been a wonderful experience. I have learned many social skills and responsibility. I love the people I work with and I enjoy delivering meals to the elderly. It is nice to work some where I feel comfortable. Not only has the summer program provided knowledge but also the financial support I need as a single mother. Having a job and being able to provide my son with the things he needs and wants has given me a boost in character. I have been inspired to set fourth many goals for my future. I would be very grateful if it were possible for me to continue working at the Senior Center through the year-round program. Once again thank you for everything.

Chelsea Spangle

Justin Bond:

To: WAEDA Staff

Hello, I am Justin Bond and I work at the Lavaca Senior Center in Lavaca, AR. My summer work experience thru WAEDA has been great. I have learned various skills such as food service and preparation, waiting tables, familiarization with the Lavaca area, janitorial skills, and I have learned how to interact and have fun with the senior citizens I get to provide an extremely vital service for. I do numerous tasks each day. My primary job is assisting with food preparation, serving food, hand delivering food and groceries to homebound seniors, various janitorial tasks, assisting the seniors while at the center, and spending time interacting with them to make their visit as pleasant and fun as possible. I have made many fun memories at the Lavaca Senior Center. I will never forget my co-workers and the fun times we have had. There was never a dull moment from the time I entered the center until the time I left. Secondly, I won't forget activities I got to participate in such as playing checkers and exercising with some of the ladies that come to the center. The main part of my job was delivering food to homebound seniors,

since some couldn't remember my name, I picked up many nicknames along the way, a few of those include; John, Jason, Josh, Honey, Sugar, Baby, Darling, Cutie, Youngster, and MANY more. After graduating Lavaca High School I plan to attend college to become a doctor. By working at the Senior Center, I have gained many Human Relation skills, which will be useful in all my future endeavors. I am looking forward to next summer and trying to get another opportunity to work thru the WAEDA program.

Kimberly Corley:

July 29, 2009

To WAEDA Staff:

I am Kimberly Corley, and I worked for WAEDA during the summer of 2009 at the South Logan County Health Unit in Booneville, Arkansas. As a full time college student, finding a job during the summer is not always easy. But WAEDA helped make it easier for me. While reading the newspaper, I saw WAEDA's ad requesting summer workers. I made a phone call and went to the Logan County Court House to apply for employment. Within a week, I received a phone call and was assigned a work site. During my employment at the Health Unit, I received training in filing, indexing, and proper paper work for many of the programs that the Health Unit offers to its patients. I learned the benefits offered to patients by Family Planning, Breast Care, WIC, and childhood immunizations. I scheduled appointments, sent reminders, and answered phone calls. I was able to improve my communicative skills by working with patients and coworkers. I practiced time management skills while handling my own time sheets that my supervisor would approve at the end of the pay period. I enjoyed and benefitted greatly from my employment through WAEDA, and I would appreciate the opportunity to work for WAEDA again.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Corley

Ethan Harbour:

To: WAEDA Staff

As I worked this summer for Western Arkansas Employment Development Agency Incorporated (WAEDA), placed at the Booneville Human Development Center (BHDC) in the Social Services (SS) office, I have learned many new things to broaden my scope of proper business procedures. Throughout the summer I have cleaned a basement now at the SS as the "Clothes Closet". This project is for the all clients who especially, are respites, out of money for the month, or ones that have behaviors and tear their clothes as a result. Also, I have answered quite a few phone calls, made arrangements for trips, organize files, and run the occasional errand. Every Monday the Social Services Office has a weekly meeting to discuss new BHDC polices, who is going to be off for any time, and objectives for the week. I was fortunate enough to be allowed to be included on these meetings and from this I learned valuable procedure to go by after I complete college and start my own business. The tasks that I have done through this summer at the SS office, have kept me busy for the whole eight hours that I was at work. My

supervisor has been very consistent with working with my schedule, which this summer has been chalked full of dental appointments, oral surgeries, and summer vacation days. Overall, this experience has been a valuable one to me, and if one is to ask the people I worked with, they would say the same I am sure.

Jaci Taylor:

Mr. Chad Wilson,

My working experience at the Lavaca Senior Center has been amazing! I'm so thankful that I was able to have that job! I have learned many skills while working there! I have learned to cook all varieties of food. I help keep the center cleaned and picked up, and I also learned to interact with Senior Citizens. I made many friends while working there! The people I worked with were great, and very welcoming! I'm going to miss all of them very much! I have also made a lot of great memories! I hope that I get to work there again next summer! It's a wonderful place with wonderful people! I feel like family to everyone when I'm there! It's just like I have a lot of grandmas and grandpas! I will never forget working out with the elders, watching them play bingo, and eating until I was miserable at the food show! I love my job at the Lavaca Senior Center and hope very much to go back next year!!! Thank you. Jaci Taylor

Kimberly Tobias:

To: Whom It May Concern:

There are many reasons why working in the Department of Arkansas Workforce has made a difference to me. One of them being able to learn new things and meet new people. First of all, by working here in Workforce it has made me into a more open and social person. One of my many tasks I do is communicate with many customers by helping them the best I can. A privilege I have is that I am bilingual and I am able to help both Hispanics and Americans to my ability. I'm happy to help bridge the communication gap here in Workforce. Also, I communicate with many of the employees in Workforce, which allowed me to open up and build a bond of trustworthiness with them. Next, since working here, I have made a big improvement with my maturity. I feel that I know a little more about how it is in the real world for adults. I realize that life isn't as easy as it seems to be without a job and having responsibilities. But I've learned to be grateful for life even if it isn't the way you wish it were. Finally, many other things I have also learned during my short period of time here is, I've successfully learned to scan papers into the computer, learned how the unemployment works and I've also learned how to use the fax machine and printer. In addition to that, I feel that I have developed my abilities in speaking both Spanish and English more fluently and efficiently. Lastly, one of the most important things I have learned is to accept constructive criticism and use it to the advantage for others as well as myself. In conclusion, working this summer in Arkansas Workforce through WAEDA, has been a great opportunity for me and has opened doors to many new things. I greatly appreciate and thank WAEDA for providing me with this opportunity this summer.

Sincerely, Kimberly Tobia

Katrina Frantzen:

To WAEDA Staff:

I have enjoyed working through WAEDA at the Adult Education Center. I would like to continue my job duties that I have here. I believe that I have learned so much. I have learned how to do most office work. But I feel that there is still so much that I can learn from my fellow Co-workers. There isn't a day that goes by where I do not learn something new to what I could use to help me in the future.

How this job has helped me out is I for once am able to help my mother pay bills. I am able to buy my own school clothes. Instead of having to depend on someone else to buy my clothes or wondering if our family will be able to afford new clothes this year. So if you can continue to let me work. I can prove to you that it will not be a mistake and, that I can be responsible, and a dependable person that I know that I am.

I have enjoyed the opportunity that I have had with working with WAEDA. Again THANK YOU for all the help.

Katrina Frantzen

Corey Yardley:

To WEADA Staff:

First off I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to work with WAEDA, and the Alma Public Library. Through working at the library, I have learned how important organization is in the work area. Also, I realized how much I like interacting with people, and helping them out, if it is by finding a book on the shelf for them, the name of an author, or if they just need someone to talk too.

I have benefited from working in the library in several ways. One way is that I have made a strong bond with my fellow co-workers, and they are now like a second family to me. Another way that I have benefited here is that this job is a very low stress job, unlike other jobs I might have had to work at if WAEDA had not gotten this job for me. Now that I am about to start college, a low stress job is exactly what I need. Also the other workers here have expressed their excitement and support, and my boss has also said they will work with my school schedule. I have greatly benefited from working at the Alma Public Library through WAEDA, and I hope that I can continue to work here.

Thank You Very Much,

Corey Yardley