



Rachelle's Story

With the help of her staff and the resources provided by SRVS, Rachelle is accomplishing tasks no one ever thought would be possible for her.

Rachelle is a paraplegic with multiple disabilities which include mental retardation, cerebral palsy and difficulty in communicating verbally.

When she was referred to SRVS by the State of Tennessee DRS in 2006,

Rachelle's Circle of Support at SRVS wasted no time in determining what her interests were so that she could lead a more meaningful and purposeful life through employment. The EC program took a holistic approach in assessing her likes and dislikes and the type of work possible for someone who is in a wheelchair, does not communicate, and has the use of only one hand. Rachelle's DSPs also observed that she did not like crowds and preferred her own space. Through this assessment, EC staff were able to develop a job which became the perfect match for Rachelle's skills, personal preferences and physical abilities -- shredding paper in the community at SRVS.

Rachelle was at first challenged by the work but with the assistance and guidance of her on-site coaches and DSPs, Rachelle became more and more independent in performing her tasks. Although her DSP must pull the staples out of the paper she recycles, Rachelle has learned to feed the paper into the machine, quite a feat when you consider she could not even touch the shredder before. One profound moment

came when the shredder jammed and Rachelle figured out how to wiggle the paper loose to unjam the machine. Rachelle's DSP, Paris Pittman, says, "that pretty soon Rachelle won't need me. This job is a great fit for her. She's able to work in her own space and looks forward to coming to work and seeing everyone." And like anyone who works, Rachelle looks forward to payday and seeing her paycheck.

Rachelle also lives in a SRVS' ICF home. Levada Jones, her house manager, has known Rachelle since 1992 when they both came to SRVS. She helped Rachelle graduate from Douglass High School. Jones says, "Rachelle is very smart and comprehends well." They work on various activities that increase Rachelle's communication skills and strengthen her extremities. With assistance from the EC and CL programs, Rachelle is leading an active life and has a job of which she can be proud.

Photos Above (L-R): Rachelle at work feeding paper into a shredding machine; Rachelle and Paris sort through the amount of paper needed to feed into the machine.

