

Alicia Works in the Community

Alicia has been happily employed through SRVS' Employment Concepts (EC) program where she started working as a member of the SETS mobile janitorial work crew in 2004. The EC program matches employers in the community with jobs seekers with disabilities. The enclave provided cleaning for various business sites and state buildings. It was hard work for Alicia, but it enabled her to become independent and self-supportive.

Today, Alicia is flying solo, working full-time without the fellow members of her work crew as a cafeteria steward for Sage Dining Services at Hutchison School. As a steward, Alicia is tasked with carrying out many duties on her own. She maintains the cleanliness of the school's kitchen and is responsible for replenishing the eating utensils and dishes for the students to use at lunchtime. Recently, she has been given additional responsibilities, from helping the cooks prepare the meals, to serving the students the meals at various food stations throughout the cafeteria.

The job keeps Alicia hopping with little down time. She works with a staff of eight feeding 1,000 students and staff within three separate lunch periods. Kirk Martin, Food Service Director and Alicia's boss, says he wishes he had eight Alicia's. "Since she started working for us in February of 2008, Alicia has become one of my best employees," boasts Mr. Martin. "I had never worked with a person with a developmental disability before, and would never have known Alicia had a disability. She is very punctual, determined to learn and does not mind being asked to do something."



Louis Moses, II, has been Alicia's job coach since her days as a member of the Sets crew, but many, including Alicia, would say that he has been more like a life coach. Through the EC program, Louis has provided Alicia a path toward building a career, but he is committed to seeing Alicia grow both personally and professionally. "Alicia was traumatized at an early age and was kept isolated and secluded from many opportunities," recalls Moses. "She was expected to do very little in her life. Since coming to SRVS and working, I have seen her blossom from a shy and reserved person to one who is very upbeat, energetic, and positive. She is like a little sister to me. I help guide her through life to make the right decisions, to treat others with respect, to learn from your mistakes and never give up."

There were a lot of growing pains for Alicia both on the job and off. She had to prove to herself and to her staff that she was capable of being a steward. Alicia began as a part-time employee who needed training and supervision. She often expected herself to fail and was afraid to mess up. She felt frustrated and cried at times, but through the encouragement of her staff at Hutchison and SRVS, Alicia became a true professional. Her co-workers respect and admire Alicia's determination, work ethic and dynamic personality. Monica Dean, Alicia's supervisor, says Alicia does everything now except cook. "She helps wash, serve, make pizza, set the food stations and help prep," says Dean. "She's a team player, always willing to help and does her job well."

"I really love working for the school and helping the students. The staff is fun to work with and the work is exciting," says Alicia. "I have learned so much and every day I keep learning more." Sounds like Alicia may one day be wearing the chef's hat after all!