



## **THE BENEFITS OF WORK**

The following is a speech given by one of our work candidates. Often times Work In Progress requests work candidates that are interested in doing so, accompany Work In Progress staff into the community to give speeches in support of Work In Progress and disability education in the Columbia area. These speech contributions are given but not limited to churches, business, civic organizations etc.

I came to WORK IN PROGRESS in March of 1998, and in them have found the best friends and the best support group a person could possibly ask for.

For years, I struggled to believe in my worth, my capabilities, my strength, and on occasions, I failed to meet the test. Today I don't think like this. Today, I work for Goodwill Industries of the Midlands. It's through WORK IN PROGRESS that I have this position. Goodwill has many stores in this area. I work at the St. Andrew store. Here is what Webster's dictionary has to say about work...Something to be done, commitment, task, an obligation, the result of labor, exertion, to do one's best. To this list I'd like to add... Independence, something meaningful to do with my life, a therapeutic support system, an opportunity to be out with people (interacting); a reason to just get out of bed or off the couch each day.

Let's not forget a regular paycheck. As I think of the benefits of work, and I'm speaking only for myself, work helps to keep me alive. Working has helped me to manage my illness. It adds to my worth. Being a productive member of society is as important to me and my recovery as the medication I take each day...Just to get me though the day. I am extremely fortunate to be able to work for a company that respects me as an individual and understands people with disabilities and the battles we fight each day as we do what is necessary to keep our illness under control. For me the combination of WORK IN PROGRESS and Goodwill Industries means success.

You know that the one simple act of successfully holding down a job let's you know that you are making a statement and helping to dispel the myths and old stereotypes and discrimination that comes with having a disability. We are letting the public know that we are not to be feared or pitied. This won't happen overnight, but if we are sincere in our endeavor, we will continue to make progress. Like many of you, I get tired and weary of the struggle and at times feel overwhelmed by life and the challenges I face daily. Today, I am better off mentally, spiritually, financially and emotionally than I have been for a very long time. As I look back, I cannot imagine not working. I have many blessings to be thankful for. It has been said that when one door closes on you another one opens. This is true for me. Though all my pain, as well as the glory, I have truly been blessed. But let's not forget work and the benefits it lends to our lives.

I want to say that working is such an important and necessary part of life, and I'm sure you have your own list of benefits of work. One of my favorite sayings is an old Bohemian proverb, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." When I think of this saying, I think of WORK IN PROGRESS. They don't give you what you want, but they teach you how to get what you need to get a job, keep a job, and get on the road to being a whole person again.