

Walter Burkholder

Proof Positive

“All my life, everybody told me ‘You’ll never be anything in life, Wally. You’ll never make it.’ But I’m proving them wrong.”

Walter Burkholder was living at Transitional Living Center (TLC), when he was referred to Tabor’s Shelter to Independent Living (STIL) program. Before that, Walter was involved with some people who took advantage of him and he ended up living in an emergency shelter with a part-time job at Giant and \$7,634 in debt.

“From the first session with Walter,” says Tim Charles, his STIL counselor, “I saw that he was determined to get back on his feet and live independent from government aid. He was involved with MH/MR because of a learning disability but that did not hamper his will to succeed. He started going to GED classes. I showed him that he could not save much working 30 hours per week at Giant and paying program fees at TLC along with his other expenses. He started searching for a second job.

“It was tough filling out numerous applications and getting turned down for each one. He had some discouraged moments but he kept trying. I became accustomed to hearing how he was doing everything he could, but he saw little improvement. With a strongly determined expression he would say, ‘I’m going to keep pounding the pavement until I get another job.’”

And he did just that. Friendly Cab offered him a job driving Redrose Access and Giant soon took him on full-time. Walter says, “It really worked out great. All I think about when I get my check is my bills and getting groceries. I found two decent jobs that I like, opened up a 401 K with the cab and an IRA with the bank. I put in about 80-90 hours a week at work and am enjoying life finally. I don’t have the pressure of ‘How am I going to get my bills paid?’”

Tim helped Walter find an apartment in the city and, nearly a year later, Walter never wants to move. He is happy with his landlord, the neighborhood and his neighbors. Tim reports that “His persistence in overcoming obstacles and his drive to reach his goals have encouraged me during my time working with him.”

As for Walter, “If it hadn’t been for TLC and Tabor, I wouldn’t be where I am today. I owe them my life. This should prove to everybody that there is help out there – you just gotta reach out for it.”

To date, Walter has paid off a total of \$6,339 in debt in just over one year. “I wish I could just talk to people that are in debt to tell them there is a light at the end of the tunnel.”