**Michelle**

(Michelle)

My name is Michelle, and I am a loan officer assistant at a mortgage company. I assist loan officers, help clients obtain a residential mortgage, so they can purchase a home or refinance their home for a better rate. I decided that I did not want to be on benefits any longer and I wanted to get back out into the workforce. I contacted the Vocational Rehabilitation Center and was aligned with a VR counselor. I was concerned about losing benefits, but I was reassured by the VR counselors that when you are in Social Security disability, you can actually go back to work and you have a five-year period where if it doesn’t work out, you can go right onto your benefits.

(Jessica)

Michelle was a great consumer to work with. I think the big piece was the rapid engagement of making sure she was engaged and making sure that she was ready and motivated to work off of her benefits. And the other big piece was really kind of defining what those benefits were and what the timelines looked like.

(Michelle)

Working with the VR counselor was amazing. It gave me direction and I was able to manage what I needed to do every step of the way. I thought about going back to school, so the VR counselor got me hooked up with our local university and helped me with all the documentation in order to move forward to register as a student. All of those services are available to anybody who reaches out to them. Now that I’m employed, the process of going through the VR counseling was definitely worth it. At the time, there were some struggles that I had to go through and it seemed like there was a lot of paperwork and homework and things of such nature, but now that I’m working, I’m independent, I’m on my own.

(Ryan)

I found Michelle to be a very passionate person about helping the people and putting forth that extra time and effort. She has a great appreciation just to be able to work and do what it is that she does. I think that kind of passes onto the clients and the other coworkers that we work around.

(Michelle)

I get up in the morning and I know that I have value, that I’m a person and I’m going out and I’m helping others. And when I go home at the end of the day, this gives me a sense of fulfillment. And of course, the other is that I have a little more income, so I can go on trips, I can go out and maybe have dinner a little more often than when I was on the benefits. Recently, I went on a vacation to Arizona, as I love to travel. And I did something that I hadn’t been able to do previously because of where I was at in my life. And I was able to do a little bit of skydiving, which is now a newfound love and I will continue to do.