

THE SOUTH CAROLINA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT



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High School/High Tech leads to success

"I cannot stress enough how beneficial the High School/High Tech program has been to my personal and professional development," says Thomas Cornelius. Thomas attributes much of his success as a recruiting coordinator for Pioneer Recruiting in Charlotte, NC to his experience in High School/High Tech (HS/HT).

"I entered the program during some of the most formative years of my life and, in addition to simply being fun and engaging, the program challenged me with experiences that have proven to be instrumental. I met wonderful people who even today, five years later, I consider close friends," explains Thomas. "And I was able to work in professional environments that would have otherwise been out of my reach as a teenager."

"Thomas was initially a reserved and introverted individual in high school. So shy and timid," recalls Kerry Reece, Greenville Area VR Employment Coach.

Thomas entered the HS/HT program during his junior year in January 2006, when his disability presented a challenge for much-needed assistance with counseling and career exploration.

Reece worked with Thomas to engage him in a wide range of interactive group activities to improve his communication skills and self-esteem. Thomas was introduced to team building, goal setting, and interview skills. He also enjoyed participating in Disability Mentoring Day.

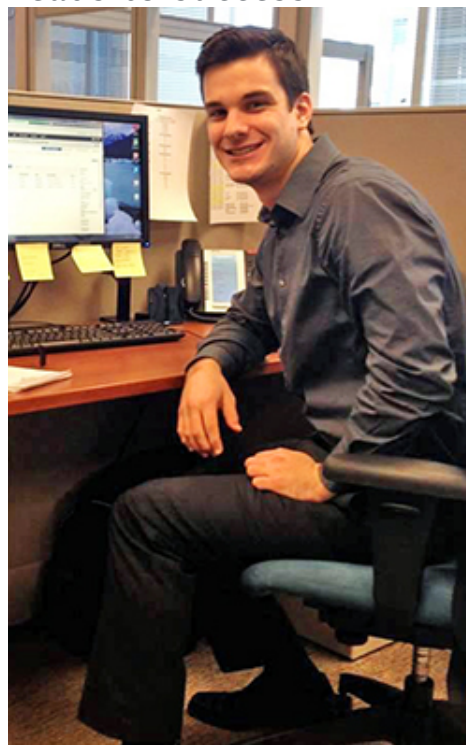
While Thomas was still in high school Reece arranged two paid internships to provide him firsthand opportunities to not only learn the importance of teamwork, but explore his career interest in the field of information technology.

While at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service division in Greenville, Thomas learned advanced technical skills in capturing data from various sources and distributing information for television and radio. Other valuable lessons in quality control and communication were gained at Spinx's Corporate Office in Greer.

"Working at NOAA and Spinx while still in high school really taught me the discipline to work my way through college later on," says Thomas. After high school, Thomas became very active in his community and went on to college. He received a B.A. degree from Winthrop University, graduating in May 2011 with a 3.25 GPA.

"It has been absolutely awesome to see Thomas develop into a very responsible, extroverted and successful young man," says Reece.

In addition to a rewarding career at Pioneer Recruiting, Thomas also enjoys working part time as a computer salesperson at Best Buy in Rock Hill. where he has worked since April 2012. This combination offers him the



*Former High School/High Tech student
Thomas Cornelius.*

...where he has worked since April 2011. This combination offers him the opportunity to fully utilize both interpersonal and information technology skills he gained through his HS/HT internships.

"The HS/HT program truly broadened Thomas' horizons," says Reece. "It helped him develop exceptional leadership skills and greatly improved his self-esteem."

"On the whole, it was almost a head start—and certainly a great motivator—for my entry into the workforce," affirms Thomas.

Around the state

Schaeffer earns Lean Six Sigma Green Belt

Nancy Schaeffer, program analyst at the DDS State Administration Office, recently earned a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, learning the methodology and strategies for process improvement and error reduction.

Originally developed for the manufacturing industry, Lean Six Sigma techniques improve the quality of process outputs by identifying and removing the causes of errors and by minimizing variability. Lean Six Sigma also creates a special infrastructure of people within an organization (Black Belts and Green Belts) who are experts in the field.

Lean Six Sigma techniques have been adapted for the service industry and are now widely recognized as a service industry standard.

During her training, Schaeffer completed a project that involved gathering nine months of DDS claim data, data analyses, process improvement, and training. While successful Lean Six Sigma projects typically show a 30% process improvement, Schaeffer's project results demonstrated an impressive 83% process improvement.

Schaeffer also passed the certification exam with a score of 95% and she is now serving as a Lean Six Sigma mentor.

Schaeffer believes that basic Lean Six Sigma methodology and tools are easily applied in our agency.

"I'm excited to continue to grow my knowledge base," she says. "I look forward to giving back to the agency by implementing Lean Six Sigma tools now and in the future."



Nancy Schaeffer, Lean Six Sigma Green Belt.

Berkeley Dorchester Job Fair

Forty job ready clients participated in a job fair at the Berkeley Dorchester work training center on February 22. Employers included Aging Gracefully; Best Buy; Verizon Wireless (Call Center); Grounds Maintenance, Inc.; Publix; Lowe's; Parker Hannifin; NCO Group; Joint Base Exchange and Goodwill Industries of the Lower State.





Each employer was enthusiastic about the clients they interviewed and all employers left with names and resumes of potential candidates for employment.

Did you know...

...that actor Christopher Reeve, star of the "Superman" movies, visited SCVRD's West Columbia campus October 29, 1999?

He was in Columbia to speak at an event sponsored by Limitless Sports, which encouraged sports competition for people with disabilities. Reeve met with young people and adults, including some SCVRD staff and clients, while on campus.



Events

Camden

- March 12 - Hosts **Breakfast for Businesses** to continue exploring ways that Vocational Rehabilitation can assist community business.
For more information, call 866-206-5280

Beaufort

- March 14 - The **JPI Journey to March Madness**, which includes intensive JPI services and mock interviews, culminates in a Job Fair on this date.
For more information, call 843-522-1010

Hartsville

- March 14 - Job Fair at the Hartsville Work Training Center.
For more information, call 843-332-2262

Columbia

- March 27, 9am-4pm - **SC Assistive Technology Expo 2013** at Brookland Banquet and Conference Center, 1066 Sunset Blvd, West Columbia.
[Find out more.](#)
For more information, call 800-915-4522

Enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment

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