



Mission Moment • October 2018 • Guest speaker: Allen Shellenbarger

Centralina Workforce Development Board is honored to have the 2018 Governor's NCWorksAward of Distinction winner Allen Shellenbarger as this month's Mission Moment speaker.

Throughout his early life, Allen was engaged in sports and fitness, and by high school he earned a football scholarship to Methodist College. During the fall semester of his senior year in college, he suffered a massive brain stem stroke. The stroke left him with quadriplegia and limited ability to communicate verbally. These heavy blows to his health had the potential stop any future educational and or employment goals.



Though he could never play football again, fearlessly pursued his passion: sports. Soon, Allen was referred to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), he resolved that he would he would have a successful fitness career using a motorized wheelchair and an alternative communication device.

His work ethic, motivation, or academic ability were never in doubt by those he worked closely with but his VR Counselor, Karen Byington, was concerned the rest of the world would not be as accepting. DVRS assisted him with completing his college education at UNC- Charlotte by providing specialized transportation, assistive technology, and living supports. Allen earned a bachelor's degree in Exercise Science with an overall GPA of 3.89. He also gained certifications as an AFFA Personal Trainer, an ASCM Exercise Physiologist, and NSCA Strength and Conditioning Specialist.

The VR Business Relations Representative, Lori Carlson, developed an On-the-Job training opportunity at the Keith Family YMCA in Charlotte as a personal trainer. Allen worked hard and developed a reputation with members who willingly afforded him the opportunity to develop a personal fitness plan and provide coaching sessions which yielded positive results. He has also gained the trust and respect of his co-workers, with many seeking his expertise. As his training concluded, he was offered ongoing employment as a personal trainer.

The most significant challenge he continues to face is those who do not know him and only see his disability, despite his many abilities. "Getting to know Allen as person and not as a person with a disability opens minds and hearts to consider giving another person a chance," said Byington.

For more information on the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, visit www.ncdhhs.gov or email Lori Carlson at lori.carlson@dhhs.nc.gov.