

Derek's Story

Derek was born with hydrocephalus 26 years ago. Because of the retention of water in the ventricles, his head was enlarged and some brain damage was sustained. In particular, the pressure distorted the Corpus Callosum, the main connector between the two upper hemispheres of the brain, so that Derek's thinking processes always seemed unconnected - and they were. However, Derek tested in the low average range in intelligence and was able to complete his secondary school education at a basic level. He can easily read at a Grade 5 - 6 level and has always been very good with words. As a matter of fact, he was the one the other students turned to when they didn't know the meaning of words.



Upon completion of high school, he entered a Transition to Work program for people with special needs. It was at this time that I administered the then Kolbe AA to Derek, hoping it would help in placing him in the appropriate Co-operative Education placement. Because of his cognitive abilities, this was really the only Index I felt comfortable administering to him, as I knew he would understand the AA. His score is 7 8 2 4. I was actually a little surprised at the 4 in Implementor as Derek never liked to have dirty hands. The littlest dirt and he would hold up his hands to be cleaned. To this day he goes through a number of table napkins at each meal. His results did not surprise me as I thought back on his life. This was a child who liked regularity from the word go, who loved the confines of his playpen, who would stay with a toy until he had whatever solved before moving on to another one. He was the only one of my children who put away his toys when he was finished with them. His gross motor skills are fairly good but he does have difficulty with finer skills requiring more coordination of movement. Derek was the one who told you how to put the blocks together rather than build it himself. (Wish I had had this knowledge when I was taking him to developmental specialists.)

Derek loves to talk about machinery, in particular lawn mowers and chainsaws (hence his nickname, Chainsaw). He remembers all the model numbers, all the specs, the types of engines, etc. In the Transition program, when asked about his interests, naturally this is what he mentioned. This led his teachers to select a placement for him in a lawn and garden equipment store, cleaning lawn mowers that had been brought in for repairs. At this point, mother went down to tell the teachers about Derek's Kolbe results. I pointed out to them that although he talked about this equipment, I felt that the placement was not suitable because he didn't like to get his hands dirty, and he wouldn't stick to the task because he'd want to talk to the customers about specs and service, etc. But of course, I'm only mother. So Derek took the placement and was there for three weeks. Everything I told them would happen did. No fault to the people at the Garden Centre. They really were most accommodating but of course became frustrated - as I'm sure Derek was - with the fact that he was never where he was supposed to be but rather he was busy detailing to customers the features of the equipment. He was let go. Derek is a well-adjusted, happy young man. He has always been raised with an understanding of his capabilities, encouraged to try but to understand that there are things that are beyond all of us and especially so him with the added challenges he faced. However, this was the first time we had seen him be so hard on himself. He would sit in the family room and the tears would come. He blamed himself for what had happened. He has always understood far more than he is capable of expressing. It was a painful time for all of us.

So mother returned to the school and made them listen to who Derek was innately. I told them he needed a place that would value his talent for organization and for detail. I told them to talk to Derek about his Kolbe results as I had sat with him and explained them. I must have gotten

through because they found a new placement for Derek, a business that they had never used before. It is a large video store, owned by two local entrepreneurs. They have dubbed Derek Chief>Returns-Officer. He receives the videos, sorts them according to category and then puts them back on the shelves. He knows where every video is and people who ask about certain ones, are led immediately to the appropriate section and shelf. This is his 6th year at the store and they are quite pleased with his work. They are extremely patient with Derek and often need to nudge him to get his 'thinking' mind on track again - but he does his work and does it well. He won't leave unless he has finished what he's doing, even missing his bus and having to wait another half-hour to take the next one. The owners have told us that Derek always has good ideas when they talk to staff about rearranging the store and have incorporated some into the subsequent changes. He feels like he's a productive individual and he is. He may have fallen upon this placement and subsequent employment anyway, but I was very happy to have had him 'kolbeised'. It helped tremendously.