



Given a Chance...

Phyllis is a single mother of 4 who is in her 40's. She is very proud of all her children and the way she has raised them. One of Phyllis's children, who is on the Autism spectrum, is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts. He did an internship at the NASA facility for two summers – the officials were so impressed that he was hired as a computer engineer and continues to work there today. His Autism has been a challenge but it never held him back from his dream.

Phyllis has her own challenges – she has a learning disability, anxiety and a panic disorder. For ten years she worked at a fast food chain restaurant. Throughout her employment however, Phyllis was verbally and physically abused by her coworkers. At one point it was suggested to Phyllis she reach out to the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) for help. In 2011, Phyllis was referred to The Nemasket Group and began working with an Employment Coordinator, Syrena Costa-Neves. Syrena knew that Phyllis would need to rebuild her confidence and from day one started the process to help make that happen.

Shortly after they started working together, Syrena and Phyllis learned that the local Home Depot was hiring. Syrena assisted Phyllis with her application and the following week she had an interview and was hired immediately as a cashier. Due to her anxiety, Phyllis had a great deal of self-doubt and worried that she would not be successful. She also worried that she would be treated like she was at her previous job. Syrena kept encouraging her and provided the appropriate support but for the most part, Phyllis just needed to know that Syrena was a phone call away.

Within the first month of her employment at Home Depot, Phyllis won a 42-inch flat screen TV through an employee raffle. Two months later, she became "Cashier of the Month" and has since won this award almost every other month. In April 2013, Phyllis was offered the job of head cashier. Her manager told her she was the best person for this position. Phyllis quickly reached out to Syrena with some doubts about accepting this new job. Syrena's response was: "They truly appreciate you, Phyllis, and you should go for it". After Phyllis accepted the new head cashier position, she texted Syrena to tell her: "Goes to show you that people with learning disabilities can overcome if people give them a chance."

Phyllis was head cashier from June 2013 – March 2016. She stepped down because she liked being involved more with the customers rather than running from one register to the other all day. As of 2018, Phyllis still has the highest number of "Cashier of the Month" recognitions and Home Depot credit card marketing results! AND has truly shown how successful individuals can be once they are "given a chance."

Written by Syrena Costa-Neves



People who fill roles that are valued by others (example: photographer, employee, co-worker, voter, musician, volunteer, college student) will be granted the good things of life.



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SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2018
Fort Phoenix State Reservation
Fairhaven, MA

Join us for a great morning of fun as we Walk or Run through Fairhaven with family, friends, and neighbors while raising awareness and support for The Nemasket Group.

The first 125 registered adults will receive an event T-Shirt
All registered children (under 12) will receive an event T-Shirt



For more information and to register, visit www.Nemasketgroup.org