

Aaron Stone Receives Frank Loughran Award

(Pictured L to R – Mike Murtha, Aaron Stone, and Joe Leddy)

(Portsmouth, NH) Aaron Stone, a veteran Career Resource Specialist on our Auburn, Maine Team, was presented our Company's special *Frank Loughran Award* at our mid-year management meeting. The Award was presented by our Company's founder, Joe Leddy. Aaron becomes the first team member in our history to receive the award twice (2006)! He was nominated for the award by Mike Murtha, the Auburn Director, and selected because of the many unique placements he achieved over the past year. Aaron is known for his creative approach to finding positions and establishing natural supports and independence in the workplace. At the Award ceremony Mike read his nomination, which focused on Aaron's extraordinary work with 14, yes 14, of our clients. Here is what Mike wrote about three clients – Scott, Laura,.

Scott was a VR referral that had never had a paid job, and his Autism affected his ability to communicate and express himself. When Aaron was trying to determine what type of job match could be appropriate, Scott kept saying "monster bike" to Aaron. Realizing this was something very important to Scott, he made some inquiries, then went to his supported living home to see this "monster bike", and discovered that Scott could not afford his own bike, so he went around and collected bicycle parts from everywhere he could, and put them all together to create his own bike. Having this information, Aaron went to the HR manager at Wal-Mart and advocated for Scott, resulting in him being hired for a position building bikes in their sports department. Scott is now the happiest person on the planet – he gets to do what he loves, and get paid, and he has since purchased himself a brand new bike with his earnings.

Laura was referred by VR, she had very limited mobility and she only could use her left hand, but she wanted to work in an office environment. Aaron developed a position for her at Affiliated Computer Systems, and due to his support of her and avocation to the employer, they purchased an adaptive "left handed keyboard" for her to use at work. Through his work support and job retention consultation, Laura became one of their most productive employees. **He helped her become so successful, that the employer decided to alleviate the mobility issues she experienced in traveling to and from work, by purchasing and setting up an adaptive work station so she could continue her great efforts from home.** Both the employer and Laura were very pleased they met Aaron Stone.

Ian was a VR referral who never had a paid employment position. Although he had no work experience, he loved music, and although his Autism caused him to have very limited speech along with "ticks" and other "behaviors", he really wanted to get a job in a retail music environment. Aaron approached Bull Moose Music, and they told him that part of the culture of their store is to hire eclectic employees, and they challenged candidates to submit "unique" resumes that depicted their personality. **Aaron assisted Ian in creating a resume that was 3-**

dimensional, shaped like a cube. The Bull Moose manager was blown away by this creativity and stated that Ian's resume literally stood out "on top of" all others they received. Ian was offered an interview which Aaron assisted him with, the led to Ian being hired. Total creativity in job development from start to finish led to this success story.

History of the Award

This award was established in memory of our late Vice President, Frank Loughran, to recognize excellence in Supported Employment. It is given annually to an employee who has exhibited creativity in job development strategies for individuals with disabilities and a commitment to natural supports in the workplace. Frank was a wonderful person who balanced his work as head of the finance department, with the work Work Opportunities Unlimited did with the individual clients we served. Frank cared deeply about the quality of services we provided and was a leading voice in the company to ensure individual clients were gaining vocational skills and independence. Upon Frank's untimely death Work Opportunities Unlimited decided to honor Frank with this recognition in memory of his commitment to helping individuals improve their lives through the world of work. This award has been given annually since the early 1990's.

Congratulations, Aaron!