

## WHAT MATTERS?

# Purpose

**Dustin** has an entrepreneurial spirit, and his passion is weaving. Born with cerebral palsy that impacts his physical and cognitive abilities, he likes to weave by hand, even though he can use only one of his, because, as he explains, **“This makes for character and integrity in the product, and that is my purpose, along with building a business. It feels good to have a purpose.”**

Four days a week for six hours a day, he participates in a community day services program with three other adults. During that time, the group volunteers at different places in their rural Washington County community, while also visiting parks and libraries, and working on life skills activities.

Dustin, 30, says he can use that time to work on his weaving, which he carries with him. He remembers a time when his day program and work were all center based, and notes that, although he doesn't like change, he now prefers going out into the community each day because of the broader variety of people with whom he engages: “I now meet more different people who I can relate to. I like the social aspect of being in the community.”

Some days, Dustin goes to his job at the Marketplace, an antiques and curiosity shop in Sharpsburg, where he opens the store and runs the cash register, dealing with a variety of customers and consignors. He also sells his woven rugs and placemats at the shop.

“Dustin does a good job of understanding people's different abilities and moods,” says his program manager, Scott, making him an asset to the business. Standing by to help is his job coach, who Dustin says is “more of a facilitator, helpful when I need him but not in the way.”

Some of his community hours are spent serving on various committees. For example,



*Dustin behind the counter at his job at the Marketplace shop.*

he is vice president of the Legends, a self-advocacy group for which he organizes fundraisers such as bake sales and car washes, with the proceeds going to the Humane Society. And he attends meetings of the Weavers Roundtable, during which he learns about weaving techniques and materials. He also has a support person to help him go out one or two evenings a week to shop for home needs. “My favorite thing is to use that time to hang out and talk with my best friend, Tommy,” says Dustin.

Recently, Dustin moved out of his parents' homes into his own apartment. He admits that the change was hard at first. “It was overwhelming moving in there and knowing the things I could no longer count on: meals being made for me, easy social interaction,” he explains. “There's homeyness and loneliness. The homeyness, how I make it my own, is important, but the loneliness can suddenly bite me. I'm getting used to the homey factor plus being alone.

“It was my idea to move out,” he adds. “Nobody really wants to live with their parents forever.”

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What matters? That our days be spent with purpose. Services are changing to help people with disabilities lead the lives they want. Ensuring they have opportunities to work and spend their days in other meaningful ways, alongside people without disabilities, is one of the ways change is happening. Learn more at: [www.md-council.org](http://www.md-council.org)