2020 Texas Focus: Self-Determination
Friday, February 28th, 2020
1:30 PM-3:00 PM
Disclosing a Can-Do List

Presented by
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Developed for
Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Outreach Programs
Tell Me about You

This assignment will help us build a professional relationship while working together in the classroom. I would like for you to start by reading my short bio. Then I would like for you to write a short but thorough bio about yourself. There are some questions below that are designed to prompt some ideas for your narrative however, the information you share is not limited to these questions.

About Me

My name is Valerie Alvarez and I received my degree from The University of Texas at El Paso and, shortly after, I returned to Austin and began my career at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. While at the school I worked in many different capacities such as teacher’s assistant, technology support TA, head track coach and vocational rehabilitation instructor. I have experience working with a variety of students whose ages range from 8 to 22 years old as well as working with students whose academic abilities ranged from on grade level to practical academics for students with cognitive impairments. I spent almost 9 years at TSBVI and leaving was one of the hardest decisions I have ever had to make in my professional career. I began working at TWC in 2013 as a Career Guidance instructor at CCRC. While working for the agency I have written curriculum for the CG department, I have taught the College Prep program and presented at several conferences around the state. Also, I have obtained my Supportive Employment and Job Placement Specialist certification from UNT. Most recently, I changed jobs and now work as the Blindness Training Coordinator. In October of 2017 I recorded a TED Talk at Texas State University thus, I am officially YouTube-able! Though it was difficult leaving TSBVI, I have really enjoyed my time at CCRC and most of all I love waking up knowing that there will be a possibility for me to have a profound effect on a student’s life. I have RP and relating to my students about blindness drives my teaching style as well as my dedication to their success.

Question:

Who are you?
Where do you come from?
What professional experiences have you had?
Do you have a vocational goal and if so how do you want to achieve it?
What causes your visual impairment?
What are your tech skills like?
Are you a cane user?
What do you dream about?
What are your favorite hobbies?
My Ability Statement

My Can-Do List:
Here is a list of the can-do’s given the circumstances.

Professional
- I can prepare and submit accurate and financially sound bids and proposals.
- I can prepare and submit material list pursuant to job specifications and code enforcement.
- I can schedule a variety of contractors via any number of networks I have compiled throughout my career.
- I can perform most all manner of trades involving fastening systems as it pertains to framing, trim, sheetrock, form setting, roofing, and anything involving a hammer and nail.
- I can address most all concerns that an H.O.A (homeowners’ association), builder or landowner may have.
- I can negotiate solutions to problems arising from disputes involving money, material, or labor.
- I can supply a full complement of tools, manpower, and expertise.
- I can complete and comply with all local, state, and federal guidelines, as well as inspection requirements.

Construction
- I can manage all aspects of residential home construction.
- I can operate the controls of locomotives and the safe movement of trains and freight.
- I can observe and comply with Federal Railroad Administration rules, i.e. hazardous materials.

Recreation/Hobbies
- I am a certified scuba diver and as such can plan, execute, and safely enjoy a dive.
- I can demonstrate proper etiquette on the golf course.
- I can adhere to all rules and sportsmanship as it relates to hunting and fishing.
- I can host parties and social gatherings.
- I can perform maintenance on my vehicles.
- I can budget my income.
- I can repair my motor home, boat, and jet ski.
Learning to:
- Cane skills
- Operate tools and equipment
- Use an IOS products
- Read and write braille
- Utilize several forms of assistive technologies
- Learn new skills concerning job search and preparation
- Master independent living techniques
- Conduct my affairs in the corporate world
- Improve computer skills
- PC
- Open Book Scanner
- Web based E-mail
- JAWS
- Screen reader
- Word
- Excel
- Windows and Apple
- Function in a cafeteria
- Plan bus routes
- I am learning to use adaptive technology both JAWS/NVDA

Tell me a little about yourself…

I have been in the workforce for over forty years. My resume includes entry-level jobs as a younger man up to and including ten plus years as a locomotive engineer. The majority of my career has been devoted to residential construction. My talents have been especially proficient in the carpentry arena. I have been responsible for all facets of home building and light commercial endeavors. With the main body of my work revolving around residential and home improvements, I have directed and coordinated among sub-contractors, city, state, and federal regulations as it pertains to timelines and meeting specifications and inspections. These responsibilities include but are not limited to obtaining material, labor and working closely with homeowners as well as builders. Advertising and marketing are also areas where I have a proven track record as reflected by and exceptional rating with the Better Business bureau, in the Chamber of Commerce here in Ft. Worth, and flawless credit and accounts with longtime lumber yards and supply houses.
I received my Engineer certification in May of 1998 after being promoted from conductor. I have operated mainline trains ranging from general purpose switch engines up to and including a litany of long distance trains transporting well over 15,000 tons. I am F.R.A., GCOR, and Hazmat certified. As far as being both conductor/engineer qualified requires me to observe and comply with various track warrants, safety measures, and strict adherence to rules governing mainline movement.

How does my blindness affect my employment?

For reasons that are obvious, my blindness has compromised my ability to perform most of the actual hands on duties that have become second nature. With over 35 years of experience under my belt, the tasks necessary to complete projects has been ingrained to such a degree that knowing the scope of the job and performing are really one and the same. Having said that, I’m certain I can contribute as much as a consultant/superintendent than as a member of the labor force at large. Technology in general and aids that are geared toward visual impairment have been developed that would have been unheard of only a decade ago. I am able to enjoy this progress in the form of scanners, voice-over software, recording devices and a vast array of assistive aids. These products and services are readily available to those who know where to look. You can now read an entire manual by simply using a keypad. The internet now affords luxuries ranging from simple tutorials to inspection specifications as required by local, state, and federal guidelines. My ability to coordinate subcontractors, order materials, schedule meetings and work closely with all parties. With homeowners and the full scope of the relevant interests, I’m confident I can create a viable atmosphere that not only produces results, but the goals pursuant to each individual’s objectives.

Perfect Ability Statement:

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scanners, screen reading software, recording devices and a vast array of assistive aids. I am confident that my skills in cane traveled with assist me with safe navigation in and around all work environments; my knowledge of braille and computers will increase my chances of obtaining this job. I am ready and willing to answer any questions about my blindness as it applies to the job task of the job posting.
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Figure 1 TSBVI logo

Figure 2 IDEAs that Work logo.

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