

Investing in Local Talent

In a service region with a population of more than 7 million people, over 120,000 employers, and a labor force of over 3 million, it isn't often that a single individual stands out. But when Victor Adams started his journey out of homelessness and into a well-paying apprenticeship everyone at the [Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions](#) took notice.

It isn't just because [Victor's story](#) was compelling and touching, although it is both. It isn't just because our service played an instrumental role in helping him on his way to success and stability, although it did. And, it isn't because there are thousands of other individuals with stories like his that are just waiting for the right opportunity to activate them, although there are.

The reason that Victor's story resonated so strongly is because it serves as a model of what can happen when we marry our intentions as economic development drivers, with the needs of our regional employers, and look for candidates among underserved and too often forgotten populations. In Victor's case, that population includes youth who have aged out of the foster care system, and need help and guidance finding their way in the world.

Victor Adams is originally from Minnesota. He and his sister were raised by his mother who suffered from substance abuse and addiction. He never knew his father. During Victor's childhood, he and his family moved from shelter to shelter in different states and at one point, their home was broken into, set on fire, and burned to the ground.

During high school, Victor's mother was arrested for robbing three banks in one night and stealing \$80,000. She was incarcerated for three years. During this time Victor lived with his grandmother who was suffering from stage 4 liver cancer and was waiting for a donor. She died while receiving treatment.

When his mother got out of jail, she contracted Swine Flu. While she was able to quit drugs, she remained unable take care of Victor and his sister while she was undergoing treatment for the deadly influenza virus. Victor and his sister moved to Houston to live with his aunt, although she did not get along with Victor. When his mother was able to take care of herself, Victor moved back to Minnesota to live her, but she later died.

Victor moved back to Houston, but because of his volatile relationship with his aunt, he went into CPS custody at the age of 16. He then lived with a foster family until he graduated high school and aged out of care. From there he joined the military but was injured during boot camp.

Feeling like he didn't belong anywhere, he tried to commit suicide. When he got out of the hospital he moved to Houston without a job and was homeless. He was able to get several minimal wage jobs, but he saw no way out of this situation.

It was during his time at Star of Hope that Victor first connected to [Workforce Solutions](#). We helped him enroll in an apprenticeship program through our partners at [Adaptive Construction Solutions](#), and Victor is now employed by [Empire Steel](#) as an iron worker with a starting pay at \$17.00 an hour.

In order to meet the needs of the modern Texas economy in an age of [record low unemployment](#), we must redouble our efforts to help everyone in our region, including the most vulnerable among us connect to [good careers](#).

The public workforce system is uniquely positioned to understand employer needs and invest in developing the untapped talent often overlooked in people experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, or young people who have aged out of foster care.

In the last 24 months, Workforce Solutions helped more than 570 people launch new careers through our employer-driven [talent pipeline](#), including 25 new [Registered Apprentices](#), with employers reporting a 90% retention rate.

To meet Victor, see the story aired by our local [ABC-TV](#) affiliate.

To learn how Workforce Solutions can help your company improve recruitment and retention efforts, contact our Talent Development team at 713.688.6890.