

Dream Job, At Last

Tina's first job is a job of a lifetime.

{ BY MARGIE BARHAM }



Perhaps one of the first things you notice about Tina is her infectious smile as she greets you with a sincere: "Hello, welcome to Walmart." So with her cheerful demeanor, it is easy to see how she'd be a natural at being the first friendly face you see when entering the store. However, despite her positive attitude and a dedicated determination to work, her path to this career hasn't been an easy one. You see, at the age of 58, when many folks are thinking about retirement—this is Tina's first job.

While many people enter the workforce long before their teenage years or a college-prepared career, Tina's journey to employment has been a lifetime in the making. The road she traveled was long and riddled with obstacles, disappointments and challenges. It's also been an inspiration for those traveling with her and helping her along the way.

Following high school at age 18, the Vineland native wanted nothing more than to find a job and be treated like everyone else. Unfortunately, her special needs created barriers that could not be overcome through her determination and positive attitude alone. Year after year, potential employers were reluctant to hire her because of her difficulties. Although she desperately wanted to work, she struggled with keeping up with the production requirements of a job, and became emotionally distraught when given constructive criticism by her supervisors. Fortunately, she entered the Easterseals New Jersey program, which provided her with vocational training and assistance to prepare her for the workplace.

When Jackie Hinton, employment specialist for Easterseals New Jersey started working with Tina in October 2015 she focused on coaching efforts to improve her self-esteem and to conquer the woman's biggest challenge, which was how to handle criticism. The two used role-playing to explore various workplace scenarios to train Tina how to react appropriately.

"We watched videos ... from which she can draw strength," explained Hinton.

Additionally, through the perseverance of a dedicated team at the Millville Employment Center, Tina's wish came true in March when she joined Walmart.

She is proud of what she calls her "dream job" and her only disappointment is that she can't work more. In addition to her greater duties, management at the Vineland Walmart store has since carved out a special role for Tina who provides samples to guests in the grocery section, including various foods and drinks, from produce to Tina's favorite—pastries from the bakery.

Tina, who lives in a group home in Millville, continues to be exposed to new things at work, such as how to use a computer to view her work schedule and to clock in and out. Fiercely independent, she also is being coached to ask for help when needed.

"What's most amazing about Tina is that she has accomplished something that a majority of us never get to," said Hinton. "While most of us take our careers for granted, so many folks hold out hope to find that one 'dream job' that we'd love to be at each day. Sadly, most will never obtain that type of satisfaction, but Tina has—and that is a testament to her character and passion for her community."

Hinton will work with Tina as long as both are affiliated with the program. In her position Hinton prepares participants in Easterseals' employment programs with the social, mental and physical traits they will need to succeed in the fields to which they are hired.

Easterseals New Jersey is one of the state's oldest non-profit organizations with an objective to help enrich the lives of people living with disabilities. Although we know it as Easter Seals, the company rebranded in May as the one-word Easterseals.

Since 1948, Easterseals New Jersey has been creating solutions to change the lives of people with disabilities and special needs. Its mission is to help individuals and families live, learn, work and play in their communities with independence, equality, and dignity. Over 7,000 people in New Jersey with developmental disabilities—including autism, physical incapacities, mental illness and other such difficulties—receive services each year through Easterseals. The programs are designed to help those with developmental disabilities work toward achieving independence and full community-integration; and for folks like Tina—to find a job of a lifetime. ❧

Chicken Cubes	Bone-in Split Chicken Breast (10 lbs. or more)	Country-Style Pork Ribs	Pork Picnic (2 pc. vac pack)
\$279 lb.	\$129 lb.	\$1.99 lb.	99¢ lb.
SPECIALS • JULY 12-16			
		HOT DEALS!	
1853 Vine Rd., Vineland • 691-4848		MarcacciMeatsAndProduce.com	
Whole Beef Sirloin (vac pack • cut free)	Whole Beef Knuckle (vac pack • no cut)	Beef Rump or Bottom Roast	Our Famous Smoked Bacon
\$399 lb.	\$249 lb.	\$259 lb.	\$369 lb.

it doesn't get more local

Alliance to Prevent Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
creating healthy & safe communities

Vineland Municipal Alliance

Did You Know?

Nearly 7,000 Americans initiate medication misuse or abuse every day.

Got Prescription Medications?

Dispose of any unwanted medications safely, securely, and anonymously at the
Vineland Police Department • 111 N. 6th Street • Vineland NJ 08360

For more information on joining the Municipal Alliance or questions about Prescription Medication disposal please contact the Vineland Municipal Alliance at (856) 794-4131

Project funded by the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (GCADA).