

# Easterseals

## TN

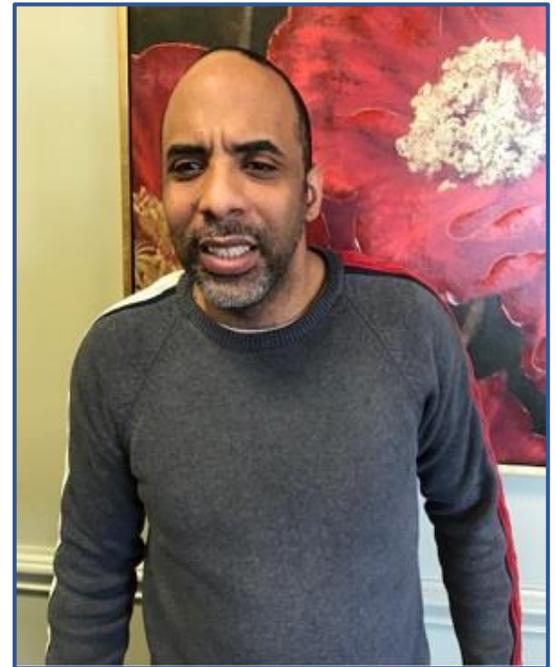
ALL ABILITIES. LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES.

*Through the ESTN Supported Employment program, our staff teaches job training skills, engages local employers, and places members in jobs, while mentoring each individual, as needed, along the way.*

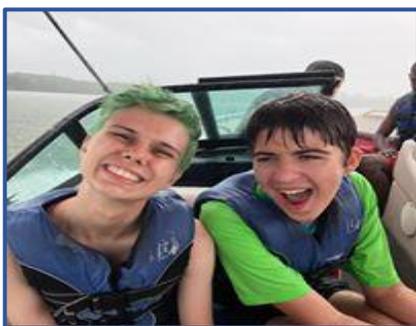
**We help achieve personal goals, as well as assist our members to be active in their community.**

Nicholas is a happy, polite, and outgoing young man who likes to participate, be productive, and make money. Guess what? Through the Easterseals Tennessee Supported Employment Program, Nicholas's aspirations are being fulfilled since landing his job at Big Cats Pizza Parlor in Lexington. Cleaning the restaurant two mornings a week is helping Nicholas gain greater self-confidence, bond with more people, and contribute to a larger community. As well, Nicholas is thrilled with wearing a uniform and with all that glory that goes with it, such as the sentiment of being a team member and the responsibilities that it invokes.

All the while, his bank account continues to grow –another goal that brings a big smile to his face and is a sensational topic of conversation when among his family and friends. Granted, in his spare time, he still enjoys watching television, playing video games, and discussing Professional Wrestling with his peers; however, lately his focus has transitioned from his every day routine to his “on the job” accomplishments. Nicholas's story is not uncommon. The Easterseals Tennessee Job Coaches have noticed that the desire to be working in the community is the drive that keeps our members energized and empowered to the best of their abilities.



*Nicholas prepares for work.*



## Thank You For Your Generous Financial Support For 2019 Easterseals Tennessee Camps

The generosity of individual, corporate, and foundation funding enables us to challenge the mind and body of our campers through captivating activities that includes (but is not limited to) swimming, archery, kayaking, theater, crafts, climbing, and nature walks. We thank you for making this fun, fitness, and building of friendships possible! In the summer 2019, we will offer 10 weeks of youth day camp, two weeks of youth resident camp, and two weeks of adult resident camp. To learn more about our camps, click on: <http://www.easterseals.com/tennessee/our-programs/camping-recreation/youth-camps.html>.

*James, a remarkable young man, has navigated through the obstacle course that we call life with zeal and determination.*

Referred to Easterseals Tennessee through DIDDS, James began receiving support from Glenda, one of our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).

With Glenda's foresight and advocacy, James landed a maintenance job at the Army National Guard. As his job coach, Glenda acquainted James with the facility, reinforced his job responsibilities, and assisted him in his position as needed. Over time, James developed into a self-sufficient and effective employee.

Unfortunately, in 2018, James was diagnosed with cancer. As it was not caught in the early stages, James had to undergo an extreme form of treatment with Vanderbilt. James continued to work at the Army National Guard as long as he could until he was placed on medical leave. With the care of his mother and DSP, James entered a pilot program for treating individuals with developmental disabilities that entailed a rigorous course of treatment. James faced his daily treatment with a positive attitude despite the side effects he went through each night. James returned to work not long after completing is treatment to suffer yet another setback. So, James had to undergo surgery that took him out of work again. Through it all, Glenda was always there. Following his surgical recovery, James was released to go back to his job, only to then experience the biggest change in his life. He lost his mother unexpectedly.

Luckily, his family and Glenda were able to pull together James' resources and successfully stabilize his life. Now, James lives independently with support throughout the day from his sisters and Glenda. James is back at the Army National Guard and his cancer is in remission. In his spare time, Glenda involves James in various cultural and recreational activities. Recognizing his creativity, she has even taught him the art of flower arranging. James favorite outing is delivering his arrangements to friends and acquaintances who James feels needs a boost.

James is a shining example that, with perseverance, an individual can beat the odds no matter how high the mountain seems to be. Recently, a DIDD surveyor, whom had worked with James prior to Easterseals, stopped in to visit with James. He was very impressed and made note of how much James had transitioned and grown in the few years since he had last seen James. With the combination of support and personal ambition, James took all his mountains and made them into hills. Currently, his possibilities appear limitless.



*James delivers an arrangement that he created.*

## Recent Happenings: TNCO Legislative Day



*Representative Darren Jernigan, District 60*



*Senator Ed Jackson, District 27*



*Tim Ryerson, President and CEO*

Over the past few years a shrinking pool of workers are willing to perform this physically and emotionally demanding work: helping people get in and out of bed, go to the bathroom, shower, eat, participate in recreational activities, locate jobs, and sometimes deal with challenging behaviors.

Daily staff members are expected to cook, be medically savvy and write plans for improving accomplishments. At the same time, wage reimbursement to agencies on a federal and state level have stagnated to averaging around \$10 an hour, making recruitment difficult.

While low wages for direct support professionals is a nationwide problem, Tennessee ranked last among 20 states in a 2016 survey. To continue the focus on helping those staff that are in these demanding positions, February 2019 saw Easterseals Board

### The Crisis in Direct Support

Members and staff took to the State of TN Capitol speaking with over 30 legislators about the crisis. Legislators listened and many vowed to focus on increasing the reimbursement model for direct care support' staff.

So, next time you visit with a legislator, please take some time to remind them of the important work performed by Easterseals and ask them for continued support in raising the model for better paying direct support professionals. Thank you.

## President and CEO Corner

Mark Your Calendars:	
Adult Spring Break Camp	3/15
The Big Payback	5/02
Youth Fishing Tournament	5/18

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