

A CHARLESTON SUCCESS

JERRY WEAVER

My journey with the CWT program at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center began in the spring of 2017, I had just completed the STAR (substance treatment and recovery) program and was feeling excited to rejoin the work force. I was introduced to my CWT counselor Stacy Ries and was assigned to work with Logistics. I remember working with the full-timers for a few weeks and enjoying the work, there was even talk about getting on full-time. Unfortunately, I was dealing with some personal issues and sadly I had one more relapse in me, well the 'weekend' relapse turned into 4 months (and 4 felonies).

I had sobered up in November of 2017 to plead into Charleston County Drug Court and asked to rejoin the CWT program, I was accepted without any judgement and assigned to work in the Electrical Shop in December of 2017, things were going very well but like my drug court counselors always say, society wants its payback. My relapse from earlier in 2017 had consequences and those 4 felony arrest warrants were issued. I learned they had searched my mom's house earlier in the day and later learned that they had come up to the VA hospital too. This happened on the Friday before New Year's weekend, one of the things that I learned through my CWT experience is to be accountable for my actions, I showed up to work after the holiday weekend and learned about the police at the hospital. I had a decision to make, I could have left the hospital and avoided the police or I could accept my fate, I decided that I was tired of running and waited patiently in the Electrical Shop for my pending arrest, I was arrested and held for the warrants officer to pick me up. Shackled hands and feet I was escorted off the premises.

I spent about 90 days in county jail and was released to continue my drug court program, the very next day I reached out to Stacy and she welcomed me back to the CWT Program in the groundskeeping department. I spent several months working the grounds and was later accepted in the Sterile Processing Department CWT program. I remember during job searching at one of my CWT



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Recovery is Working

appointments that I told Stacy that I was just going to get hired here at the VA medical center. Believe it or not I was hired full-time May 2019 and just celebrated my first full year of employment.

CWT taught me how to retrain my mind to doing the right thing, how to be a team player and how to be accountable. I'm honored to share this story because CWT holds a special place in my heart, they didn't give up on me and kept welcoming me back with open arms. They believed that this guy could be a valuable commodity and hopefully I have proved myself to my teammates. I want to stress the important role that CWT plays with Veterans after they have completed the STAR program, it helps build on your recovery, showing up each day helps build your self-esteem, self-confidence and determination. CWT has really helped me discover new things about myself and it helps Veterans find their way back from mental health and substance use issue. If a guy that was 'escorted off the premises and shackled hands & feet' can bounce back then anybody can.

Donta Trapps, Charleston Manager