

# Former Offender finds Success with WIOA

*Summer 2016*

Derik Davis is a former offender who contacted the Harnett County Department of Workforce Development for help reaching his career goals. Although Derik faced several adversities that could have dissuaded him from pursuing career training, Derik decided that he wanted a new life for himself and he would not let his past choices, homelessness, or hunger stop him from achieving his aspirations.

As a child, Derik was an avid reader who easily grew bored with school and looked forward to being sent to detention where he could read all he wanted. Although his mother never completed school, she instilled the importance of education to both Derik and his brother, and he considers his mom to be one of the smartest women he knows. Despite being able to read at the age of 4, by the time Derik was 14, he had dropped out of school and began hanging with an older crowd.

Even though Derik had become acclimated to living a life of making fast money, the desire to learn and read never left him, and by the age of 16 he had earned his GED. But Derik's lifestyle eventually caught up to him, and he ended up incarcerated. "Finding myself in prison for the first time didn't change my outlook on my hustle, it just changed how I chose to carry it out," stated Derik. "And by trying to outsmart the system, I found myself in and out of prison for the next several years with my last release being in December 2014."

After Derik was released from prison for the final time, he decided it was time to formulate a "master" plan. "In this plan I knew that I no longer had time to give to the system, and the only way to not give them anymore of my time was to not go back to being the old me," Derik stated. He obtained his driver's license and began to research career opportunities for former offenders and discovered Truck Driving as a viable option for his life. Unfortunately, Derik was homeless at the time and was unable to pay for his Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

Derik contacted the Harnett County Department of Workforce Development in Lillington and enrolled in the WIOA Adult program in January of 2016. "Mrs. Charlotte Leach [the Career Center Coordinator] believes in second chances, and she gave me the opportunity and helped me enroll in Roadmasters Truck Driving School," Derik stated. "They were very understanding of my situation and knew how important it was for me to reach this goal."

In addition to the help Derik received from Harnett County, the Director of Roadmasters, Gary Johnson, assisted Derik with obtaining food and shelter throughout the course of his training as he was still homeless at the time.

In March of 2016, Derik obtained his CDL and is now employed with TransAm Trucking Company earning an annual salary of \$35,000 a year with benefits. He is responsible for the transport of a wide range of products to various businesses and exudes excellent customer service to all clients he encounters. "I am my only obstacle now and I refuse to fail," stated Derik. "With failure and excuses no longer being an option, success is inevitable for me."