

Social Security Column

“TICKET TO WORK” INSPIRES BALLROOM DANCER TO DANCE ON

By Karyl Richson

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Megan Riggs was just like many other people in their late twenties: bright, ambitious, and full of life. She earned Bachelor degrees in Forensic Science and Biology, with a minor in Chemistry. Riggs started working and building her career. In her spare time, she pursued her passion, competitive ballroom dancing.

In January of 2008, Riggs had a major depressive episode. Her illness caused her to lose her job, and financial struggles resulted. Riggs qualified for Social Security disability benefits. The monthly payments helped keep her afloat financially, but even then she had the desire to work again. Knowing she would need help returning to work, she looked to Social Security’s “Ticket to Work” program and other work incentives for support on her path back toward self-sufficiency.

Riggs learned that the Ticket program was free, voluntary, and designed specifically for adults who receive disability benefits through Social Security. She decided the program was a good fit for her, as it would help her find a career that could lead to a brighter future.

Once Riggs made her choice to participate in the Ticket to Work program, she decided to work with an Employment Network (EN) that provides employment support and guidance. The EN helped Riggs develop a plan to achieve her work goals and offered advice on career building, job placement, training, and counseling. “I could try work,” said Riggs. “I knew I wasn’t going to be on my own.”

Using her Ticket, she was able to test her abilities, build her confidence, and continue to receive her benefits while working toward becoming fully self-sufficient. Through Social Security’s work incentives, she maintained her health care coverage, which gave her peace of mind.

Riggs found stable employment. As a result of her hard work, she now works as a document control specialist, earning more money than she received on disability benefits.

The Ticket to Work program helped Riggs achieve a more fulfilling life by helping her regain the satisfaction of work. She now enjoys working, reading, spending time with her Cocker Spaniels, and has even been able to return to competitive ballroom dancing.

“With Ticket to Work, I've received the tools to excel and the help of people to keep me going.”

Thousands of Social Security beneficiaries like Megan Riggs have earned more money, begun careers, learned new skills, and met new people through the Ticket to Work program. If you're disabled and ready to change your life through work, this program may be the ticket for you, too. To learn more, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/work.

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