

New Beginnings from Loss

Ligorio “Ligo” Laws has always enjoyed cooking. He had been a successful restaurateur in Newburgh, Indiana, operating his bistro-style restaurant Inlumi, serving internationally inspired cuisine. He came to the United States as a child from Belize for a number of surgeries to correct a congenital club-foot condition. Ligo earned an associate degree and completed culinary training at the Chicago Hospitality Institute, and worked as a bartender, cook and chef for the next 20 years, culminating in ownership of his own restaurant. However, due to complications from diabetes, Ligo lost his left leg in a below-the-knee amputation. Despite the surgeries to repair his club foot, pressure on the foot developed a painful sore that refused to heal, which led to the decision to amputate. Due to Ligo’s declining health impacting his functional ability, he was forced to close his restaurant.



Ligo came to Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) from a place of loss. He had been fitted with a prosthesis, and first came to VR for assistance with repairs and parts replacement for the device. However, he began to experience pain on the stump—a pressure sore that was not healing. He was advised to remove the prosthesis frequently to aid in healing, but was obviously unable to do that working in a kitchen. He felt he could find a job without much problem in a number of local restaurants, but did not feel he could stand or walk for the amount of time that this sort of job requires. He had helped out a friend in his restaurant a few times, but it caused him a great deal of discomfort. Ligo began to feel that even though being a chef was his passion, he did not know that this was something he would be able to do for years to come. Also at this time, he was going through a divorce, and was struggling with depression. He was at a low point, and was becoming desperate for steady income.

These circumstances lead Ligo to open up to other types of jobs, and he subsequently worked with an employment services provider for resume assistance and job development. In the meantime, it was determined that due to a number of contributing factors, Ligo would need a new prosthesis that would better fit him and be more tolerable. He worked with Hanger Clinic, and received his new prosthetic device. During this process, Ligo had built rapport with the staff at Hanger, and in an interesting turn of events, he was offered a job with Hanger as an Orthotic and Prosthetic Technician in September 2015, and began his training, learning new skills on the job. He was successful on the job, and his VR Counselor, Cheryl Conner, held the case closure meeting with him onsite at Hanger Clinic in the lab. Conner said that Ligo was very happy, and was excited to show her the various aspects of his job as a technician.

Just recently, Conner heard from Ligo, who called her to tell her that he had decided to return to his homeland, Belize, to be closer to his family. While Sean at Hanger Clinic was sorry to lose Ligo as an employee, he was supportive of Ligo's decision to return to Belize. Ligo shared with Conner that he planned to purchase a small fishing boat, and also planned to volunteer at a local orthotic/prosthetic lab in Belize. "Ligo called to express his gratitude, and to tell me what a difference VR made in his life and how very grateful he is. He told me that when I first met him, he was in such a dark place and the sky had fallen. He had lost his leg, his job, his wife and his home. I wanted to cry," said Conner, "and I thanked him for telling me that because we often don't get to hear that. This makes me remember why I do what I do," said Conner.

~ Submitted by Cheryl Conner, VR Counselor, Area 20