

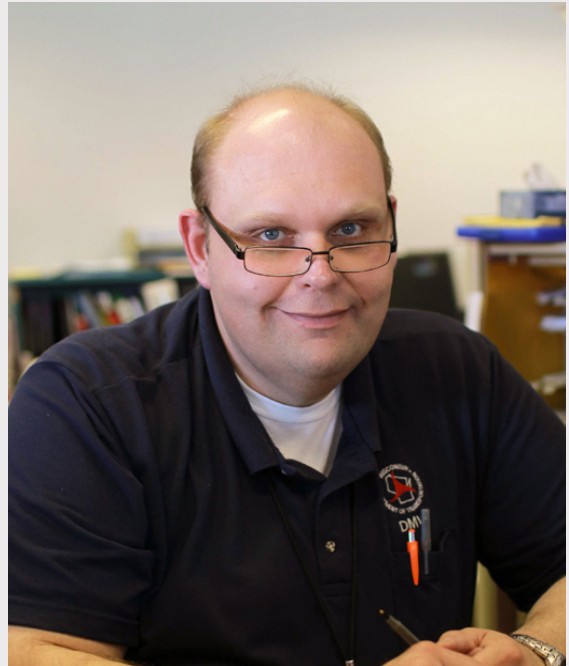
# Returning to His Roots: An Update to Rob's Story

Rob looked at the house where he grew up with a renewed sense of pride. It sits on 3 acres of land that has been in his family since World War II. He had to sell the property 20 years ago because of bankruptcy brought on by a life-threatening illness. Now, the house is his again, a tangible legacy that he can pass to the next generation. His tenacity, his work ethic, courage, support from his community and family and Social Security's Ticket to Work (Ticket) Program all made it possible.

It's been 7 years since Rob shared his original **Ticket to Work success story**. He reflected on how far he has come since he shut down his trucking business when both of his kidneys failed. Rob thought he would lose everything, including his life.

"Things really [fell] apart," he recalls. "I went into a depression when I had to tell the employees we were going out of business. All these families depended on it. I felt terrible."

It would be years before this health crisis subsided. Between 2000 and 2012, Rob received Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) while he fought to recuperate from multiple major surgeries, including a kidney transplant. As he worked to restore his health, he completed a bachelor's degree online. Rob has always been ambitious and knew he would go back to work as soon as he could.



After so many years away from the workforce, he needed professional assistance to transition back. He found it through Social Security's **Ticket to Work Program**, and landed a job as a field agent examiner at his state's Department of Transportation (DOT).

In addition to helping him pay the bills, work allowed him to connect with more people in his community while increasing his sense of pride and well-being.

"I love my job," he says. "The people I work with are like family... I'm doing what I enjoy every day, and if I can, I'm going to stay at the DOT until retirement."

His **Employment Network** (a Ticket Program service provider) was there to offer ongoing support, answer questions about how work may affect his benefits, and progress in his career. Rob established a track record of exceptional customer service, reliability and trust with his employer that served him well, with financial stability and job security.

With a solid employment foundation in place, he focused on restoring the legacy that his grandparents left. "My grandpa started with a cottage and then acquired adjacent plots of land," he explains. "In 1981, mom and dad built the house I grew up in. Then a tornado came through and the house was ripped up."

Years after the family home was repaired, renal failure came into Rob's life like a wrecking ball and he had to sell the property. Having to break this connection to his family's past was painful. "It passed through several hands before I got it back," he recalls. "...and now I look forward to making our land a place where extended family come together again!"

In 2018, with a firm sense of security established, Rob married his long-time girlfriend. He reflects on the theme of rebuilding that has continued throughout his life and describes this chapter with pride. "We are people who never give up," he says. "We have 2 houses on our land that can be turned into more modern homes. It's satisfying to bring our property to the next level."

Re-establishing roots that connect past and future is a project Rob was not thinking about while he fought for his life and livelihood. He describes owning and building on his family's land as a gratifying and sentimental experience.

"Working as part of a family team... blending my history with [my wife's] is so rewarding. Planning for a future on this land feels like a major milestone for me," he says.

"When I was sick, I had to give up a lot," he reflects. "Getting back to work helped me to a dramatically better lifestyle. Ticket to Work and Work Incentives helped me get there."

## Ticket to Work and Work Incentives

Since 1999, Social Security's Ticket to Work (Ticket) Program has improved access to employment for over a million and a half jobseekers with disabilities. This voluntary program supports career development and promotes financial independence through work.

Through the Ticket Program, state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and service providers known as **Employment Networks** (EN) offer free services to help people prepare for, find, or maintain employment. Everyone (ages 18 – 64) who receives Social Security disability benefits (SSDI or SSI) qualifies.

If you are ready to work, don't let the fear of losing your benefits stand in the way. You can explore work while maintaining access to your Social Security disability benefits, Medicare and Medicaid coverage.

Because each person's circumstances are different, jobseekers are encouraged to consult a **Benefits Counselor**, a professional equipped to help you understand how employment will affect your benefits. To find one, call the Ticket to Work Help Line shown at the end of this feature.

Ticket to Work helped Rob find his path to a better future. **Find yours!**



Whether you are just considering working, ready to find a service provider to help you, looking for a job or already working and want to keep on the road to financial independence, the Ticket Program is here to help.

To learn more, call the Ticket to Work Help Line at **1-866-968-7842** or **1-866-833-2967** (TTY), M-F 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. ET, or visit **[choosework.ssa.gov.com](https://www.choosework.ssa.gov)**

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