

Dept. of Workforce Development: Game changer, Wisconsin mom back on her feet with help from DVR

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Green Bay, Wisconsin – For many of us, a short walk to work is a great way to start the day. But not for Jazmine Steinfeldt of Green Bay. Every morning, she would park her car a few blocks from her office and walk. Just a short walk, only a few blocks. But for her, it felt like miles!

Once at the office, she would collapse into her chair. Her day was just starting, and she felt exhausted. As an accounts payable manager for a large paper company, she had work to do. Yet she struggled to focus and get her work done.

Jazmine has what's known as foot drop, a common symptom of Multiple Sclerosis. MS is an unpredictable disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain and between the brain and the body. According to the National MS Society, nearly 1 million Americans live with MS.



Jazmine Steinfeldt, shown with daughter Jaidyn, is wearing a WalkAide, which has helped her overcome a symptom of multiple sclerosis and continue working.

Because of foot drop, Jazmine experiences weakness in her foot and ankle muscles.

She and others with this condition are not able to flex the ankle and walk with a normal heel-toe pattern. The toes touch the ground before the heel. It can cause a person to trip or lose balance, and as with Jazmine, it can cause extreme fatigue. "I was exhausted by the start of my day, walking to the bathroom was tiring, and by the end of the day trying to walk out of work was nearly impossible," Steinfeldt said.

"My MS causes exhaustion, but this was on a whole different level."

To help Jazmine, her neurologist recommended that she try a WalkAide, a device that uses patented sensor technology to alleviate foot drop. The WalkAide senses movement in the leg and sends an electrical message to the foot muscle, telling it to move correctly.

Jazmine began using a trial WalkAide provided by her neurologist, and it made a world of difference. She doubled the number of steps she could take in one day, reducing fatigue and allowing energy for work, her daughter Jaidyn, and household needs.

Unfortunately, Jazmine's health insurance company wouldn't cover the purchase of a WalkAide at the end of her trial period.

As a single parent, she didn't have the money to buy it out of pocket. She considered all her options, but could not afford it. She couldn't buy the device on her own, yet she couldn't do her job without it. She thought she might have to quit her job.

"I was a single mom, to not work was not an option for me," she said.

Thankfully, someone told her about DVR. That's the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. She knew nothing about DVR or what it had to offer, but she paid DVR a visit. She met with a licensed counselor and together, they developed what's known as an Individualized Plan for Employment.

The best part? Her plan included the purchase of a WalkAide so she could keep her job!

"It has been a night-and-day game changer for me," she said. "I never knew how much energy I was using by a simple task of walking, until I got my WalkAide. I seriously cannot express enough how thankful I am to have this."

Jazmine worked with Jennifer Stauss, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Green Bay Job Center of Wisconsin office. Jazmine said she found Jennifer "very easy to work with, kept me in the loop with everything, easy to communicate with, and really took the time to listen and understand my needs."

Individuals with disabilities who would like assistance to find a job, keep a job, or get a better job can contact DVR toll free at 800-442-3477, email dvr@dwd.wisconsin.gov, or learn more at dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr.