

## **National Disability Employment Month Success Stories**

### **Mike Wallace**

Mike Wallace, a native of El Dorado, graduated from ACTI in 2013. He completed training in automobile service technology and was taught by Wayne Thomas and the late Phil Crume. He also achieved a gold level Career Readiness Certificate. He was very appreciative of the time Rebecca Schwartz spent working with him to help him achieve the certificate.

After graduation, Mike has had a great career. He began his career at Lander's Chrysler in Benton. After two years of work, he decided he wanted a change and because he had relocated back to Hot Springs, the drive back and forth to Benton was less than desirable. In 2015, he had the opportunity to try a new career in the automotive industry: car sales.

He was a little nervous at first because he knew he would need to work hard to hone his craft as a salesperson. However, he stated that the customer service training he received as part of Career Readiness established a great foundation. He was excited to share a glimpse into his success. During his first year as a salesman he made more than \$100,000 in salary and

commission. He also shared that his wife likes that when he comes home he does not smell like oil.

Mike has also had great success in his personal life. He is married with three children and one on the way. He purchased his first home and is now looking to purchase his second home and use his current house as a rental property.

Mike shared that much of his life he has struggled. When asked what advice he would give to other ACTI students he shared the following keys to success:

- “Take care of your business” - He explained, as a salesperson, he sees people from all walks of life and income levels. Those that pay their bills on time have good credit and are more successful.
- “Show up early and work hard” - Mike has been on his own since he was 17 years old. He said to treat your education as a job and demonstrate that you are eager to show up and work hard and doors will open.
- “Customer Service Skills are needed regardless of your job” - Mike shared that he has a significant learning disability. He struggled speaking clearly, as well as with math. He still has to remind himself to slow down, but credits the skills taught at ACTI with giving him the confidence to build an incredible set of skills that makes

him a top performer. This includes both math and public speaking.

Mike is a great example of the students at ACTI. He worked hard in class and maintained nearly a full time job at McDonalds during his training. Mike is a great testament to the ACTI spirit and success that was built on the strong foundations started at ACTI.

