**Five Star Success**

When Tom Olson is asked about the best part of working for Five Star Call Centers, he’s quick to reply, “Free coffee in the breakroom, of course! But most of all, I love working at Five Star because of the people…the comradery with my co-workers is special. It’s a great place to work!”

Getting to the place where he can enjoy coffee at work with co-workers was a hard-fought journey for Tom. As a young child, he was diagnosed with a brain tumor that had to be removed, causing damage to part of his brain where vision is processed, causing him to be legally blind and have fine motor issues.

From the beginning, Tom had a very supportive family and full team backing him. He was referred to SD Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired in 2014, at 16 years of age. Getting early exposure to work and skills of blindness were key to Tom accomplishing his goals.

Tom participated in classes at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, where he was exposed to assistive technology such as ZoomText and other software programs to assist him in school. He also learned how to cook, clean and do laundry. In orientation and mobility, he learned to navigate steps, curbs, and ways to travel safely in a variety of environments. He also participated in classes called “World of Work.”

Additionally, his team at Lincoln High School and the Sioux Falls Community Campus, supported Tom in participating in Project Skills. Through this paid work experience program, Tom worked at Sanford Wellness Center doing cleaning for 250 hours.

In the Fall of 2018, his Employment Specialist with the Sioux Falls School District was assisting Tom to find a second Project Skills work experience. He contacted Five Star Call Centers and lined up an interview for Project Skills with HR. Instead of getting the Project Skills placement, Tom was offered a competitive job for the holiday season! Before starting, his Employment Specialist met with Five Star Customer Success Manager, TJ Law, to arrange for any necessary accommodations to allow Tom to do his job. Fortunately, Five Star’s computer software system was already capable to meet Tom’s needs. They added a few “bump dots” to his phone and he was ready to learn his new job.

What started for Tom as a seasonal job turned into a full-time job with benefits! Once he had his “foot in the door,” Tom’s “can do” work attitude and perfect attendance helped get the offer from Five Star. Now he feels he is truly living his life to the fullest!

Tom agrees that he would not be where he is today without the amazing support from his family, friends, teachers at Lincoln High School and Community Campus, staff at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, VR Counselor with Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Five Star Call Centers managers and co-workers. Great job TOM and TEAM!