



Judith Creed Horizons for Achieving Independence

Testimony of Jeff Smith before the
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging
“Working and Aging with Disabilities:
From School to Retirement”
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Good afternoon. My name is Jeff Smith, I am 63 years old and live in the Philadelphia suburbs. I am excited to be here today to tell you about me. Thank you to Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Casey, and the Special Committee on Aging for inviting me.

My mother is 94 years old and she couldn't come with me today to Washington, but I know she is watching me on TV! I have a brother named Tat who lives in Toronto and a sister named Carol who lives in New Mexico and they also could not come. I have a fiancé in Philadelphia named Phyllis. She is here with me today, and so are Stacy Levitan and Dave Mytych from JCHAI, Judith Creed Horizons for Achieving Independence, which helps over 130 people with disabilities like me to live independently.

I have worked at Arkema for 39 – almost 40 – years delivering the mail as a Senior Mail Clerk. I have my own apartment where I live by myself and I do not need help from my mother or my family.

I get help once a week from Dave Mytych, my social worker, who works at JCHAI. JCHAI helps me to be independent and has changed my life. JCHAI helps me feel more positive about life because they help me have more friends and I see how happy everyone else is. Everyone I know has changed because of the help they get from JCHAI. JCHAI helps me with shopping, keeping my apartment clean, and cooking. Dave was a cook before and he helped me cook fish. We are going to try a new recipe next time that he says will make the fish taste even better!

Because of JCHAI, it's a whole new way of life. I am treated better by everyone at work and in my life and it's because I am so happy.

I am very proud that I have been able to work at Arkema for all of these years. Working at Arkema is great because I love delivering the mail. I go to a lot of different places, all over our campus which is one square mile. I get to do a lot of walking, which clears my mind and I can think of different ways that I can help the world. I like to meet different people at work and from all over the world, like from Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and China. I also have a lot of friends since I have been working there so long. I even have some friends who have been there almost as long as I have.

I like that I have my own salary that lets me go to the laundromat, the market, and I can take Phyllis on dates or trips with JCHAI. Sometimes, we even go out of state on some of the trips, like to New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. All over the eastern seaboard!

One of the things I like to do in my free time is work on my rock collection, which I have gotten rocks for in Colorado, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Arizona. I especially like quartz. The rocks give me a neat feeling when I look at them. I also collect coins from all over the world. I get them from change that I get when



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I buy things and sometimes I go to coin shops in Philadelphia and get coins there. Even the Natural Science Museum helps me. I can afford to do all these things because I have my own money that I earn from my job.

Having my own job and support from JCHAI means that my mother doesn't have to worry about me anymore. She knows that I do great on my own! And if I need help, I don't have to get it from her – I know who to call, which is Dave and the people at JCHAI.

Getting older is really just part of life – it's an interesting facet of life. When I was 30, I thought, "I have so many more years of my life!" Now I can look back and say that's gone, but I'm still working hard, making a living, I still have friends, I have help with everything I need, and it's really a tribute to how good life is.

In the future, I will retire when I'm 66 because I will have a full pension and I will be able to live on that. When I retire, Phyllis and I will be able to spend a lot of time together and we'll live our own life. We'll do a lot of things with each other – we'll go on trips and go around together. We like to go to the movies, out to dinner, lunch, and breakfast. We go all over Philadelphia. I am looking forward to the next part of my life.

Thank you for letting me talk to you today.