

## The Road to Success

Moving from place to place becomes a norm when you've been shuffled between various relatives growing up.

Until two years ago, this is how Bob, a 61-year-old homeless vet had lived in and around DC. But through all the heartache and pain, Bob found a place to call home and job to call a career.

With a bit of a southern drawl, Bob is originally from South Carolina, but he has lived in the area since the age of 15. Bob was given the opportunity to join the military, which allowed him to travel the country and gain experience. Sadly, after leaving the military, Bob struggled with homelessness due to former substance abuse and other disabilities. This also contributed to his difficulties in finding and keeping employment.

However, he found his way to Wesley Housing, and after roughly ten years of being unemployed, Bob moved to Colonial Village Apartments and was referred to our employment specialist, Nathan, who helped strengthen his resume. "Specifically, I wanted to highlight the vast experience he has working in different fields. Bob's a one-man show," Nathan said as they both laughed at this.

Bob stressed the difficulty of finding a job that provides a livable wage in Virginia due to the current minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. But they kept working together. After roughly three months Bob attended a job fair in Alexandria.

At that fair, he met with the Willard Intercontinental Hotel's human resources department, and a week later was given an interview for a steward position, assisting in the hotel kitchen. Bob felt good about the interview and was excited at the opportunity to work someplace with so much history and allure.

A couple of weeks later, Bob used the library to access the internet where he opened an email saying he was hired. "I was very excited when I found out," Bob said with genuine enthusiasm.

His enthusiasm continued as he described the position, people, and culture of the Willard. "They're so positive with all they do. They ask how you're doing and they're ready to help whenever you need it. They always ask if I'm ok and they're very caring and supportive."

Sitting down with Bob, I discovered how analytical he is. His interest in understanding the Willard, its operations, and vast history, showed his passion for the position. He was committed to learning the ins and outs of every aspect.

Bob also stressed the camaraderie among his colleagues, and especially his supervisor. But what was genuinely heartwarming was how his new position brought nostalgia. Dishwashing was Bob's very first job when he was a teenager. Now, because of his grandmother, he enjoys cooking at home and walked me through the various technicalities of the kitchen.

"It makes me feel good to work with everyone. And with a dishwashing machine instead of everything by hand, like the first time," Bob said. "Through the years everything eventually tied together."