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PITTSFORD

Maurice Berry proves doubters wrong, earns YMCA honor | Exclusive

A Rochester native shares how he overcame discouragement, built a career and found connections through the Arc of Monroe's Job Path program.



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Maurice Berry is being honored by the Arc of Monroe for his work at the Schottland Family YMCA in Pittsford. Born and raised in Rochester's Upper Falls neighborhood, Berry worked at Kodak before entering the Job Path program with the Arc of Monroe.

Berry works with an employment coach, Jarrod Jones, who helps him build skills to succeed in his role. Jones has been working with Berry since he began at the Schottland Family YMCA in 2024.

"He's always got a smile on his face. He's very friendly with all the members and does a phenomenal job," Jones said. "I never have to say anything, 'Hey, Mo, you forgot this.' He's getting it before I have to remind him. He's one of our best employees, for sure."

This year, the Arc of Monroe is celebrating 70 years of supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Monroe County. Below is a Q&A with Berry. Answers have been edited lightly for clarity and length.

What has been the most enjoyable part of this experience?

Getting to meet people, getting to know them. And now that I've been here, now that I've come to the Y, a lot of people remember me from when I worked at Sam's Club, and they're like, "Oh, you're still the same." And you know, a little grayer and a little wiser, you know?

What have been some challenges for you throughout this process? How did you overcome some of those challenges?

There was a group that I had worked with at one time, and they were real bent on telling me that I wouldn't be able to achieve a lot. I had one person told me, 'Oh, well, you won't hold a job long,' or, 'You won't be able to get a, you know, you won't have a car,' or, You won't do such and such.'

And now, I have four cars, two houses and have a family. So I kinda overcame that. You know, I kinda took that as, 'Okay, I'm gonna let you think that.' And so I just started working hard and working hard, and got to where I am today.

Do you have any advice that you would give to others who are inspired by you?

Don't give up, you know? Don't let people tell you, don't let people tell you what you can and can't do. You know, don't let them tell you what you can, what you be or what you wanna be.

The Arc of Monroe

The Arc of Monroe, a chapter of the Arc of New York, has been offering programs and services to over 1,500 residents across Monroe County since 1956. For 70 years, the Arc of Monroe has been providing residents with opportunities for social development, supported employment, residential community living and enrichment, with over 42 locations across the county.

"What happens is people put together resumes and go out and interview for jobs, just like anybody else would do. But the really beautiful thing is they have an employment specialist or a job coach that goes along with them," the Senior Director of Marketing and Communications for the Arc of Monroe Christen Smith said. "That job coach can be there as often as the person supported wants or as little."

The Arc currently supports employment for individuals with disabilities through the Job Path program. Across Monroe County, over 200 businesses are participating as employers, including the YMCA.

—Genae Shields is the Business and Development Impact Reporter, working on mobility stories that focus on how people get around Rochester. As a member of the local community, Genae enjoys learning about emerging businesses and changes that impact Rochester's BIPOC and LGBTQ neighborhoods. She also enjoys supporting local artists and nonprofit organizations. Reach out at gshields@usatodayco.com or on Instagram: @genaebriphoto for questions, comments, or concerns. Thank you for your continued support!