

Carmen Harris:

I am Carmen Harris. I'm 68 years old. I live in Lincoln County and I work in Lincoln County. I am a DSP and have been there for 15 years, since September, will be 15 years.

I entered the field of this population of people by going to an open house. Someone I knew was going to be there. She worked there and I knew I wouldn't, but I had cookies and tea. She gave me an application. I filled it out. I don't know why. And by the time I left I had a job and hours, and it's the best decision I've ever made.

I really seriously never thought I would ever do anything like this, but it takes a lot of heart, it takes a lot of patience, and it takes giving.

I tried to retire once and that was awful. I would see my clients and I would think... And they'd come up and give me a big hug, and then they'd go on their way and I'd go on mine. So I lasted four months and then I went back and said, "Gee, you don't have a job for me, do you?" I have a client right now... Actually, I have two clients right now. One is extremely talkative, and very high functioning, and is absolutely wonderful. She's a gem. The other one is blind, non-verbal, and they thought originally she was deaf, but she really isn't. I can whisper to her and she gets it. If you get a smile from her, that's a gift.

I think this would be the perfect job for a retired person, male or female, because it's very humbling. We want to give. I can't say enough about it, positive things about how it would benefit someone who is retired, and you could make such a difference in this people's lives.

I think the advice that I would give to someone who was thinking about coming into the direct care is that you get a lot out of it. They get a lot out of it. And I go home personally wondering who got the best part of the day.

