

Trade Adjustment Act Assistance Recipient – Shawn Cothran

My name is Shawn Cothran and I have lived in Benton County for the past 26 years. I'm married and have two sons that have both graduated from Benton Central.

I started working at a local factory in Kentland as soon as I got out of high-school. In my 24th year of service for this company, they announced that they would be moving their production facilities to Mexico. We were told that it wasn't because we weren't producing enough product it was strictly for financial reasons (cheaper labor). I was asked to go to Mexico to train new personnel during the last 5 months of my 25 year career. I accepted the opportunity. It wasn't out of loyalty to the company; it was for the extra pay and benefits. I just postponed the inevitable, being un-employed.

I had saved up 10 weeks of vacation that I used after I was finished in Mexico. During that time I started thinking about what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Since my job left the country I qualified for the TAA (Trade Adjustment Assistance) program which would allow me to go back to school. I went to Oxford and met with Dave Kurth. He had me take some aptitude tests to see where my interests were. They pointed me in the direction of a maintenance type position. I signed up for classes at Ivy Tech for an Industrial Maintenance Associates Degree. I had missed the dead-line for the TAA assistance for my first semester of classes. Dave worked to find funding for my first semester and was successful, after which the TAA program paid for my schooling. While attending Ivy Tech, Community Action Program of Western Indiana (CAP) in Benton County, paid for the majority of my gas for driving to and from school. This helped out greatly because my wife is permanently disabled and money was very tight at the time.

I studied hard and made the Dean's List for my first four semesters. During my fourth semester I interviewed for a maintenance position with Clipper Windpower. They were looking for someone to start in January of 2009. I had stated during my interview that I would like to be able to finish school before starting work. There were several phone calls back and forth over the next couple of months. I had already started my 5th semester of school when I was offered a position that started March 1st of 2009. I talked it over with my wife and we decided that having a job in March would be better than hoping for a job in August, after I graduated. I accepted the position.

With the help of Work One, CAP, TAA, some very nice people and my own hard work at school I was able to get a job that doubled my salary and was only 7 miles from home. Without this assistance I would have never been able to go back to school and get this job. I would probably be working out of the county now, or even worse I might still be un-employed. Thanks for reading to my story.