

REACHING NEW HIGHS AT LOWE'S

Working at a supermarket in Las Vegas, New Mexico is just perfect for Nasaria Garcia.

The 25-year-old helps clean and bag groceries for 10 hours a week at Lowe's Super Save (not to be confused with the home improvement chain). "I like cleaning out the freezers, and I like earning my own money," says Garcia.

Nasaria was born with a rare genetic disorder: translocation of the ninth chromosome, which has also affected her older sister and aunt. "It does not have a syndrome name," says her mother, Isabel Abeyta. But it does result in developmental delay and affects Nasaria's hearing and speaking ability.



Abeyta says Nasaria has created her own version of sign language to make herself understood. "I talk to a lot of people and use my phone (for writing messages and in speech therapy)," Garcia says. And once you get to know her, it gets easier to understand her speech. Most importantly, communication barriers did not stop her from singing in the choir and fitting in at West Las Vegas High School. "She has made friends with a lot of the 'regular ed' kids," her mother says. "They still remember her and say 'hi' when they see her."



Nasaria began working at Lowe's through a work-study program at West Las Vegas. When she was getting ready to graduate in 2020, she was referred to the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. NMDVR provided a stipend to Nasaria as well as a job coach while she participated in on-the-job training at Lowe's. When that stint was over, Nasaria was brought on as a regular employee. She has since completed her time with NMDVR, and the state's Mi Via waiver program continues to provide for the job coach.

"She's a good young lady, with a great personality and great attitude," says store manager Ron Martinez. He adds Nasaria is a good worker who is learning to be more outgoing. "Most of the customers are friendly with her. But she's serious in her work, so she doesn't stop to socialize."

Garcia stays active by competing in track, volleyball, bowling, basketball, and softball in the Special Olympics. She has also been riding horses since age four, most recently through the New Mexico Center for Therapeutic Riding.

"It goes to show that if you have early intervention, it makes a big difference," Abeyta says of her daughter's success.

"Advocate. Advocate. Advocate," she advises. "You have to advocate for your kids and be persistent. The help is out there. Stay plugged in with resources (like NMDVR) to get what your kids need. And focus on their abilities, not the disability."

For information about NMDVR programs, contact your nearest office. There are two dozen locations across the state: dvr.state.nm.us/locations/.

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps eligible individuals with documented disabilities find suitable employment. Vocational rehabilitation is a voluntary program supporting people who want to work. With a long history of success and proven methodology for making the best fits, NMDVR is committed to helping participants thrive in their communities. For more information, visit dvr.state.nm.us or call 505-954-8500.

The Vocational Rehabilitation program receives 78.7% of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2023, the total funds awarded is \$22,066,600. The remaining 21.3% is funded by state appropriations and transfers from the Commission for the Blind and Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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