

# The Influence of Occupational Activity on Leisure Time of the Disabled People Who Live in the Rural Areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship

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## Abstract

*In most societies disabled people constitute a group with the lowest level of activity of occupational activity as well as organization of leisure time. These two dimensions in a very essential way influence each other depending on socio-demographic characteristics. In the case of disabled people vocational activity fulfils not only an economic function but also holds essential functions of rehabilitation and integration. Making proper use of free time has even greater influence on progress in rehabilitation, especially in the social sphere. This study aimed at examining the participation in leisure activities among disabled people in Lubelskie Voivodship in the context of occupational activity.*

**Keywords:** leisure time, vocational activeness, disability

## Introduction

One of the measures showing disabled people's situation is the evaluation of their socio-economic situation in a particular environment (Piątkowski and Ostrowska 1994). A highly important aspect of human existence is professional activity (Zawiślak 2011). It provides a feeling of power, being in control, being needed and independent (Garbat 2013). Disabled people's occupational activity is not only the way to achieve economic independence but also the factor which heightens the sense of self-esteem and self-realization and the way to social reintegration in a broad sense (Ostrowska 2006). Working strengthens the sense of self-esteem and utility in society, helps satisfy the need to contact other people and reduces the social barriers. It may also be an opportunity to improve health and thus a way of rehabilitation (Wasilewska 2010). The employment of disabled persons is a way of repealing the stigma of lesser value by enhancing financial and non-financial strength of the individual. In the case of disabled persons, employment is regarded as the best form of financial support and independence from social welfare. Employment evens out the status of disabled people. It makes them consumers and producers, and provides the sense of being an adult. It also attests to their ability of meeting the requirements of life (Żuraw 2008).

The participation of disabled people in an open labour market contributes to changing the attitudes of disabled persons themselves, as well as employers and other employees. In the case of disabled people, it facilitates the realistic assessment of their potential and abilities, improvement

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of their self-esteem, and thanks to that, they function better in other areas. Employers and other employees, thanks to the contact with disabled people, have the opportunity to verify functioning stereotypes, recognize their potential and learn how to support disabled persons (Magnuszewska-Otulak 2009).

A fact which is worth mentioning is that some people who become disabled (e.g., as a result of an accident) do not usually return to their previous work because of the lack of the possibility of performing it. Moreover, they are professionally inactive (Trzebińska and Dziejulska 2007). It can also be assumed that people who are on the margin of the labour market are discriminated against in economic, political and social spheres. The injustice of this division is generally felt by disabled people (Barnes and Oliver 1995). Exclusion of disabled persons from the community results in a loss of motivation for personal development and for working on themselves, which often also means the reduced participation in the mainstream of social life (Nowak 2002).

The loss of a job is always a critical event in anyone's life: it disturbs the professed system of values, it's a divisive factor in the family, it results in reduction of social position and has a negative impact on lifestyle and well-being (especially, along with the prolongation of the state of professional inactivity); it may also generate the formation of pathological behaviours (Szczupał 2006). Disabled people who live in rural areas are in a particularly difficult situation which results from poor vocational education and low general level of education, social marginalisation, and insufficient support from both public and non-governmental organizations and institutions.

Nowadays, one of the basic evaluation criteria of life quality is time management in daily life. A professionally active person pays a particular attention to leisure time, especially to its amount and form which depend largely on their lifestyle. Focusing more and more on the issues of leisure time, we should remember that leisure time is the time, excluding professional work, which should be spent on developing one's interests, fulfilling needs, having some form of entertainment and, above all, bringing benefit to mental and physical health.

According to Bombol (2008) leisure time is an economic category which has its utility and is helpful in diagnosing the processes of development. Leisure time encourages and accompanies the processes of the individual and social development as well as economic. However, active and creative spending of free time requires proper preparation which is based on creating particular abilities and habits, evoking interests and introducing them within a particular lifestyle (Denek 2002). The forms of leisure time contribute to the disabled person's personality development which is reflected in more autonomy and independence and higher sense of self-esteem (Borzykowska 1993). Increasing the level of activity may become one of the most effective ways of improving functioning, thereby creating independence among disabled communities, which various authors of research have studied (Santiago and Coyle 2004; Terry 1995). In the case of people who live in high risk environments, i.e. an increased level of poverty, participation in organised recreational activity proved to decrease their emotional problems (Law et al. 2006). The disabled whose incomes are below the national average of the particular country have a considerably limited scope of spending free time (Martin, Meltzer, and White 1989).

The study objective was to specify the ways of using leisure time in the context of the occupational activity by the disabled people who live in the rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship. The obtained results have also been compared to the Polish population in order to show the similarities and the differences in spending free time by the people taking part in the research. In the article the participants' amount of free time on the weekdays as well as on the weekends and on holidays was evaluated. Subsequently, the focus was placed on the ways of spending free time by the respondents in consideration of the type of their occupational activity. The study is an attempt to respond to the question of the extent to which occupational activity influences activity (in order to avail oneself of the free time) and thereby, if active spending of free time by the disabled may have any connection with their entering the labour market.

## 1 The methods and research material

For the purposes of study's objective, from 30 June 2010 to 31 May 2011, the employees of Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education in Biala Podlaska performed survey research within the research project "Determinants of professional activity of the disabled persons living in rural areas." This project was financed by State Fund for Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (PFRON) funds in the years 2008–2012, as a research project. The survey technique was used for this research. The research sample's size in the country scale amounted to 5 000 respondents aged 16–65. Within the Lubelskie Voivodship, 543 people were studied. The selection of research sample for quantitative research was carried out using a randomized layer selection method. The layers of the research included: province, district, municipality, gender, and degree of disability. Age as a very significant factor of professional activity was weighed as a separate layer. Respondents were randomly selected in a separate manner from each layer. The sampling frame consisted of databases of Voivodship Disability Evaluation Boards, District Family Assistance Centres, Workshops of Occupational Therapy and/or database of the Office of Government Representative on Disabled People. In the case of lack of consent for the use of databases or when databases were incomplete, after randomly selecting main layers, which consisted of districts and municipalities, the quota sampling method was used for selecting cases for research (in terms of age, gender, degree of disability). The determination of its size in individual provinces was based on the number of disabled people in the general population, according to the results of the Census of 2002. The obtained results were statistically analyzed with the use of Statistica program. The detailed information about degree and conditions of professional activity of the disabled people in rural areas of the entire Poland has been presented in a separate publication (Dąbrowski, Żbikowski, and Szczygielska 2012).

## 2 The analysis of research results

### 2.1 The amount of free time vs. occupational activity

The research facilitated gaining information about the amount of free time at the disposal of the disabled people in the rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship as well as in the whole country, diversified depending on the occupational activity level. On the weekdays, the disabled people who are professionally active most often have up to two hours of free time—58,6%<sup>(1)</sup> of the participants. Approximately one out of four participants (23,6%) has between 2 and 3 hours of free time. Smaller groups of professionally active people have a greater amount of free time. Between 3 and 4 hours of free time is at the disposal of 11,4% of the participants and 5 hours and more—6,4% of the participants. Different results can be obtained when the unemployed disabled people in the Lubelskie Voivodship are considered. This group constitutes the respondents who have on average 5 hours and more of free time per day on the weekdays, which results in the highest percentage (71,1%) because of their occupational situation. The remaining participants have less free time, more precisely between 3 and 4 free hours are at the disposal of 17,8% of the participants; between 2 and 3 free hours are at the disposal of 4,4% of the participants, and up to two hours—in the case of 6,7% of the participants. About half of the professionally inactive disabled people from the Lubelskie Voivodship has 5 and more hours of free time on the weekdays (46,8%). Between 3 and 4 hours of free time is at the disposal of 17,4% of the respondents and between 2 and 3 free hours—in the case of 12,1%. About one out of four professionally inactive people (23,6%) has up to two hours of free time on the weekdays. The research results, in the regional and all-Polish perspective, which refer to the disabled people's amount of free time on the weekdays, diversified because of their occupational activity level, have been presented in table 1.

The research results allowed for the evaluation of the amount of free time on weekends and holidays at the disposal of the disabled people with different occupational activity levels who live

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1. [In the journal European practice of number notation is followed—for example, 36 333,33 (European style) = 36 333.33 (Canadian style) = 36,333.33 (US and British style).—Ed.]

**Tab. 1.** The amount of free time vs. work activity (%)

The amount of free time <sup>a</sup>	Work activity					
	Professionally active		The unemployed		Professionally inactive	
	Total	Lubelskie	Total	Lubelskie	Total	Lubelskie
0–2	39,0	58,6	13,9	6,7	19,5	23,6
2–3	22,5	23,6	16,1	4,4	16,2	12,1
3–4	20,1	11,4	19,1	17,8	19,2	17,4
5 and more	18,4	6,4	51,0	71,1	45,0	46,8

<sup>a</sup>the average number of hours per day

in the rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship and throughout Poland (tab. 2). One out of five participants from the Lubelskie Voivodship (20%) who is professionally active has on average up to two hours of free time. Similar to the previous group of respondents (21,4%) is the group in which people have between 2 and 3 free time hours, and about one out of three (30,7%) has between 3 and 4 free hours. Many participants (27,9%) declare that they have 5 and more hours of free time per day. Taking into consideration the work situation, the unemployed participants' answers are significantly different from the ones presented above. In this case up to 2 free hours per day on the weekends and on holidays are declared by 4,4% of the participants. Between 2 and 3 hours of free time per day are declared by 4,4% of the unemployed respondents from the rural areas of Lubelskie Voivodship. One out of ten (10,0%) participants has between 3 and 4 free hours. The majority of the participants (81,1%) has an unlimited amount of time and has 5 and more free hours per day. One out of three professionally inactive disabled people in the Lubelskie Voivodship (66,2%) is in the similar situation. Almost seven times fewer participants (9,3%) comprise professionally inactive people who have on average up to 2 hours of free time per day. A smaller group of people has between 2 and 3 hours of free time on the weekends and on holidays (8,4%). The professionally inactive research participants from the Lubelskie Voivodship (16,1%) have between 3 and 4 free hours per day.

**Tab. 2.** The amount of free time on the weekends and on holidays vs. occupational activity (%)

The amount of free time <sup>a</sup>	Work activity					
	Professionally active		The unemployed		Professionally inactive	
	Total	Lubelskie	Total	Lubelskie	Total	Lubelskie
0–2	10,2	20,0	6,2	4,4	5,4	9,3
2–3	10,2	21,4	4,9	4,4	6,2	8,4
3–4	17,0	30,7	12,7	10,0	11,7	16,1
5 and more	62,6	27,9	76,2	81,1	76,7	66,2

<sup>a</sup>the average number of hours per day

## 2.2 Use of free time

The research provided specification of the ways of spending free time by the disabled people who live in the rural areas in Poland, including the Lubelskie Voivodship (tab.3). In the analysed voivodship most respondents spend their free time on the weekdays watching TV (89,3%). It is similar when we consider the whole country where 88,3% of the participants declare that form of spending free time. Over half of the participants (57,3%) listens to the radio or music in their free time from Monday to Friday. This percentage, when we take into account the whole country, is slightly higher (59,7%). Almost half of research participants in the analysed period reads books or magazines (44,6%). Many disabled people from the rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship use their free time on the weekdays in an active way because they go for a walk (52,5%) or work in the garden (39,9%). The percentage of the disabled people who live in the rural areas throughout Poland and use their free time in the active way is slightly lower and is respectively 47,7% and 31,1%. Unfortunately, only 6,1% of the participants from the Lubelskie Voivodship take up different

sport and recreation activities which is rather a poor result when compared all of Poland (13,0%) A small group of respondents from the Lubelskie Voivodship in their free time on the weekdays pursue their hobbies (16,2%). This percentage on the scale of the whole country is higher (22,7%).

**Tab. 3.** Ways of spending free time on the weekdays (%)

The ways of spending free time	Poland	Lubelskie
Reading books and magazines. . . . .	41,9	44,6
Listening to the radio / music. . . . .	59,7	57,3
Watching TV . . . . .	88,3	89,3
Using the computer / Internet. . . . .	26,7	21,7
Going for a walk . . . . .	47,5	52,5
Doing different sport and recreation activities	13,0	6,1
Working in the garden . . . . .	31,1	39,9
Pursuing hobbies . . . . .	22,7	16,2

Watching TV is the most frequent form of spending free time on the weekends and on holidays by the disabled people who live in the rural areas of Lubelskie Voivodship (90,2%). In this case the result of the whole country is only slightly lower (89,5%). About one out of two surveyed people from the Lubelskie Voivodship points out listening to the radio and music as the way of spending free time on the weekends and on holidays (52,1%). More often it is indicated by the respondents from the whole country (59,1%). A similar percentage of the participants from the Lubelskie Voivodship go for a walk (45,8%) and spend their free time reading books or magazines (40,3%) on the weekends and on holidays. The results for the entire country are respectively 52,6% and 43,3%. Only one out of ten respondents who live in the rural commune and the urban-rural commune of Lublin spends free time on Saturday and Sunday pursuing their own interests (9,9%). In the whole country the results are better because more than twice as many disabled people do it (21,2%). Unfortunately, only 4,1% of people who live in the Lubelskie Voivodship and took part in research in this period take up some sport and recreation activities. Only 7,2% of them work in the garden. A significantly larger group of research participants in the area of Poland spend free time on the weekends and on holidays doing the last two of the mentioned ways of spending free time—respectively 13,4% and 17,7%.

**Tab. 4.** The ways of spending leisure time at weekends and bank holidays

The ways of spending leisure time	Poland	Lubelskie
Reading books or magazines . . . . .	43,3	40,3
Listening to music and radio . . . . .	59,1	52,1
Watching TV. . . . .	89,5	90,2
Using computer or the Internet . . . . .	26,6	19,3
Walking. . . . .	52,6	45,8
Practicing various sports and recreation activities	13,4	4,1
Gardening . . . . .	17,7	7,2
Pursuing hobbies . . . . .	21,2	9,9

### 2.3 Ways of spending leisure time at weekends and bank holidays by occupationally active disabled people

Occupationally active disabled people inhabiting rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship during their leisure time on weekdays mostly choose to watch TV—87,1% and read a book or a magazine—66,4%. More than half of the respondents in this group listen to the radio and music—57,9%. A similar percentage of research participants from the professionally active group from Monday to Friday actively spend their free time on gardening—57,1% and walking—55,0%. Approximately one third of respondents use a computer and the Internet—37,9% and spend time on their own

hobby 34,3% during their leisure time. Only 11,4% of the occupationally active disabled persons practice sport and recreation. Results of research on ways of spending free time during weekdays by the occupationally active disabled people living in the Lubelskie Voivodship and across the country are presented in table 5.

**Tab. 5.** Ways of spending leisure time on working days by occupationally active disabled people (%)

The ways of spending leisure time	Poland	Lubelskie	$\chi^2$
Reading books or magazines . . . . .	54,4	66,4	7,54**
Listening to music and radio . . . . .	55,6	57,9	0,27
Watching TV . . . . .	87,5	87,1	0,01
Using computer or the Internet . . . . .	39,3	37,9	0,11
Walking . . . . .	46,3	55,0	3,86**
Practicing various sports and recreation activities	15,5	11,4	1,77
Gardening . . . . .	40,6	57,1	14,01***
Pursuing hobbies . . . . .	28,7	34,3	1,86

\*\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,01$

The popularity of leisure activities specified during the study is shaped slightly differently at weekends and on bank holidays among the occupationally active disabled people (tab. 6). In this regard, among the respondents from the Lubelskie Voivodship, watching TV is also the most popular—92,1%. More than half of the surveyed in their free time reads books or magazines—60,7% and listens to the radio or music—60,0%. More or less, every second respondent relaxes actively by walking—49,3%. On Saturdays and Sundays and during public holidays 19,3% of the occupationally active respondents spend their time on their hobby. Only one out of ten respondents at that time spends it in the garden or practices recreational and sport exercises—10%.

**Tab. 6.** Ways of spending leisure time at weekends and on bank holidays by occupationally active disabled people (%)

The ways of spending leisure time	Poland	Lubelskie	$\chi^2$
Reading books or magazines . . . . .	57,9	60,7	0,41
Listening to music and radio . . . . .	57,3	60,0	0,37
Watching TV . . . . .	90,3	92,1	0,53
Using computer or the Internet . . . . .	39,7	35,0	1,21
Walking . . . . .	57,9	49,3	3,88**
Practicing various sports and recreation activities	17,7	10,0	6,06**
Gardening . . . . .	23,8	10,0	16,21***
Pursuing hobbies . . . . .	27,7	19,3	4,83**

\*\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,01$

## 2.4 Ways of spending leisure time by disabled unemployed people

In the case of unemployed disabled people watching TV is also the most popular way of free time spending during weekdays—87,8%. Other commonly practiced forms of leisure activity include going for a walk—54,4%, as well as listening to the radio and music—51,1%. A much smaller group of unemployed respondents, in comparison to the occupationally active population, declared that they read books or magazines—36,7%, which may indicate an unwillingness of most of the surveyed unemployed to become involved in intellectual pursuits. In comparison to the occupationally active respondents, a much smaller percentage of unemployed respondents—6,7% spend their free time during weekdays developing their own passions and interests. The comparison of active leisure time spending looks unfavourable—only 4,4% of the unemployed practice sports and recreation, and 26,7% take time to do gardening, on the weekdays. The percentage of unemployed

**Tab. 7.** Ways of spending leisure time on working days by disabled unemployed people (%)

The ways of spending leisure time	Poland	Lubelskie	$\chi^2$
Reading books or magazines . . . . .	44,4	36,7	1,94
Listening to music and radio . . . . .	57,9	51,1	1,49
Watching TV . . . . .	86,9	87,8	0,05
Using computer or the Internet . . . . .	26,0	15,6	5,09**
Walking. . . . .	54,2	54,4	0,00
Practicing various sports and recreation activities	15,1	4,4	9,56***
Gardening . . . . .	38,4	26,7	4,84**
Pursuing hobbies . . . . .	21,9	6,7	14,11***

\*\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,01$

people with disabilities living in rural areas of the Lubelskie Voivodship and across the country in the use of the specified in the study leisure activities has been presented in table 7.

Unfortunately, on weekends and holidays the surveyed unemployed more often chose passive ways of spending free time (tab. 8). These activities mostly involved watching TV—88,9%, and listening to the radio, music—38,9%. On Saturdays, Sundays and during public holidays even fewer unemployed read books or magazines—26,7% than on weekdays. The option of taking a walk is also less likely to be selected—44,4%, as well as in the case of gardening—3,3% and practicing sport or recreation 1,1%. In the case of the unemployed on weekends and holidays only 6,7% of the respondents pursue their own hobbies, which is similar to the results during weekdays.

**Tab. 8.** Ways of spending leisure time at weekends and during bank holidays by disabled unemployed people (%)

The ways of spending leisure time	Poland	Lubelskie	$\chi^2$
Reading books or magazines . . . . .	42,7	26,7	8,79***
Listening to music and radio . . . . .	54,4	38,9	7,64***
Watching TV . . . . .	87,5	88,9	0,14
Using computer or the Internet . . . . .	24,3	15,6	3,70*
Walking. . . . .	59,6	44,4	7,37***
Practicing various sports and recreation activities	14,5	1,1	19,09***
Gardening . . . . .	20,9	3,3	21,88***
Pursuing hobbies . . . . .	20,9	6,7	12,79***

\*  $p < 0,1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,01$

## 2.5 Ways of spending leisure time by occupationally inactive disabled people

Occupationally inactive respondents from the Lubelskie Voivodship, similarly to occupationally active people and the unemployed, most often choose passive ways of spending free time—89,6% of them watch television, 58,5% listen to the radio, music and 46,1%—read books or magazines during working days. The analysed group of disabled people quite often does not avoid exercise. The research results show that 52,1% of participants of the research who are occupationally inactive from Monday to Friday go for a walk and 42,6% of them engage in gardening during weekdays. At the same time, almost one in five of respondents are in their spare time engaged in their own hobbies—18,1%. The percentage of answers on the use of spare time during weekdays by the occupationally inactive respondents from the Lubelskie Voivodship and across the country is presented in table 9. The study also provided specification of the preferred forms of spending free time on weekends and holidays by occupationally inactive people with disabilities classified as the research sample (tab. 10).

In general, the results of the study do not differ significantly from those relating to spending free time during weekdays, the only exception is the fact that on weekends and holidays a much smaller part of the occupationally inactive unemployed persons—10,6% spend time pursuing

**Tab. 9.** Ways of spending leisure time on working days by occupationally inactive disabled people (%)

The ways of spending leisure time	Poland	Lubelskie	$\chi^2$
Reading books or magazines . . . . .	41,5	46,1	3,58*
Listening to music and radio . . . . .	59,9	58,5	0,38
Watching TV . . . . .	88,5	89,6	0,54
Using computer or the Internet . . . . .	26,8	23,0	3,19*
Walking . . . . .	46,5	52,1	5,11**
Practicing various sports and recreation activities	12,7	6,4	17,73***
Gardening . . . . .	30,0	42,6	28,76***
Pursuing hobbies . . . . .	22,8	18,1	5,40**

\*  $p < 0,1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,01$

**Tab. 10.** Ways of spending leisure time at weekend and bank holidays by occupationally inactive disabled people (%)

The ways of spending leisure time	Poland	Lubelskie	$\chi^2$
Reading books or magazines . . . . .	43,4	43,0	0,02
Listening to music and radio . . . . .	59,8	54,7	4,27*
Watching TV . . . . .	89,7	90,5	0,26
Using computer or the Internet . . . . .	26,9	20,1	10,39***
Walking . . . . .	51,5	46,1	4,77**
Practicing various sports and recreation activities	13,2	4,6	34,37***
Gardening . . . . .	17,2	7,9	30,36***
Pursuing hobbies . . . . .	21,3	10,6	33,21***

\*  $p < 0,1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0,01$

hobbies, in comparison to weekdays. In the case of gardening the situation is similar. On weekends and public holidays, only 7,9% of respondents practice this activity. The test result is probably related to the nature of those leisure activities, which is considered as not appropriate to be performed in the reported period for religious reasons.

## Summary

Based on the survey it can be concluded that the amount of leisure time among people with disabilities in rural areas is related to the level of their professional activity. Those who do not engage in professional work generally have more free time. Its amount also depends on whether we consider the weekdays or weekends and holidays. Clearly, respondents declared having more spare time during this period.

When analysing the ways of spending free time by research participants it should be noted that the selection of the most popular form — watching TV is not determined by occupational activity. Both occupationally active and inactive people mostly spend their free time in this way. The same choice is made by unemployed respondents. The respondents, regardless of employment status, often choose listening to the radio or music, among different alternatives, as a way to spend free time. However, there is a wide variation in the interest in reading books and magazines. This form of leisure is preferred more often by occupationally active than inactive people, especially the unemployed. The situation may be connected with the desire and need for development, or intellectual training of employed persons who actively participate in social life. People who do not maintain their working life, are more often socially excluded, and quite frequently do not seem to feel the need to use the printed sources of knowledge.

Fortunately, disabled people quite often choose the active forms of leisure, such as walking. On weekdays, a popular way of spending free time is gardening. Unfortunately, disabled people in rural areas generally rarely practice any sports. The particularly negative situation is observed in



the group of unemployed people who apparently do not feel the need to take care of their psychophysical condition. Exercises require systematicity and commitment, the lack of which is apparently common among the unemployed. In the case of organized activities the situation may be due to the technical limitations associated with disabled people's ability to reach the location where the sport classes are conducted.

Occupationally active persons with disabilities in relation to the occupationally inactive—especially in case of the unemployed—more often have a passion or hobby they pursue and which they develop in their spare time. The pursuit of their own interests by a much larger group of occupationally active respondents is a sign that there is a link between the professional and private sphere. Occupationally active persons with disabilities are also more active outside their place of employment. Work seems to be the inspiration and has positive influence on the behaviour and attitudes of disabled people in their leisure time. In this situation, the actions of vocational activation of the unemployed persons with disabilities living in rural areas take on a new meaning. Getting a job is an event that changes the lives of people with disabilities not just vocationally, but in many dimensions.

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