

C O R I S S A &



Sonderen Packaging



Last June, 17-year-old Corissa was a summer youth employment program participant wanting a position in a daycare. She was set. She picked a site with her WorkSource Specialist, interviewed and was ready to start. However, she later found out due to an incident on her record from nearly 5 years ago she wouldn't be able to work at the daycare.

Corissa and her WorkSource Specialist brainstormed some ideas but weren't having much luck. Manual labor didn't seem like the best fit for the petite 90-lb Corissa. Then her WorkSource Specialist called on a former client, Sonderen Packaging. She drafted up a letter to Tonya, the Human Resources Manager, explaining the situation and Corissa was hired.

Corissa explains she never would have thought that she would be working at a place like Sonderen. She imagined her summer work experience would be either in a daycare or a fast food environment. Sonderen proved to be a blessing in disguise.

Sonderen Packaging is one of the largest folding carton suppliers in the United States. They are locally owned and operated and have been in business since 1963. They started with just 8 employees and are now up to 111, including Corissa. They operate a plant in north Spokane making all kinds of packages for renowned companies like Oberto, Almond Roca, and Smith and Wesson.

Tonya instantly took Corissa under her wing. She tasked her with creating an employee yearbook. Corissa met with each employee and photographed them. She then completed a variety of other projects and quickly learned the different processes in folding carton manufacturing.

Tonya and others at Sonderen were so impressed with Corissa that they hired her at the end of her work experience. She works 6 hours a week while juggling national honor society commitments, advanced placement courses, and maintaining her near perfect GPA.

Thanks to all of Corissa's hard work and dedication she will be attending Whitworth this fall with \$26 thousand dollars in scholarships and financial aid in hopes of becoming an Elementary Education Teacher. As a special reward for earning admittance, Tonya and the Sonderen team took it upon themselves to provide everything Corissa needs for her dorm.

"This is just what Sonderen does. We take care of our people," Tonya said. "Corissa now has at least three adopted moms and several big sisters watching out for her."

Without Next Generation Zone Corissa is not sure where she would be right now.