

# Charles Gets a Job



**A JOURNEY TO EMPLOYMENT**

**BY REBECCA FULENWIDER  
SWAP SPECIALIST**

**INSPIRED BY CHARLES KRUEGER  
LIBRARY PAGE**





## Notes from the Author

This story is written from the perspective of Charles Krueger, but written in the words of his SWAP Specialist, Rebecca Fulenwider. The quoted text are real quotes from the inspiration of this story, Charles Krueger, not the story character.

Thank you for reading this story. I hope Charles' journey inspires you and touches you the way it did me.

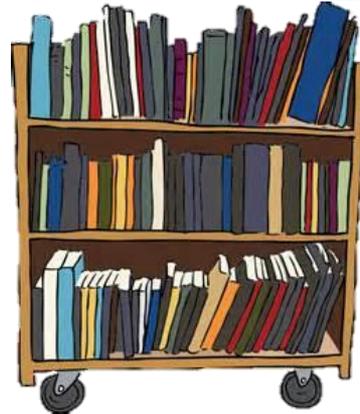
-Rebecca Fulenwider

It should be known, Charles was hesitant about his story being shared. When he asked “why me”, I explained that his story was a personal inspiration to me and if it was alright, I would like to share his journey. To this he replied...

“Well, if my story can make a difference in someone’s life, then I should share it. What would the harm in that be?”

# Charles Gets a Job

## A Journey to Employment



Written By Rebecca Fulenwider  
SWAP Specialist

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This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> time this year time my phone rang with that familiar number.



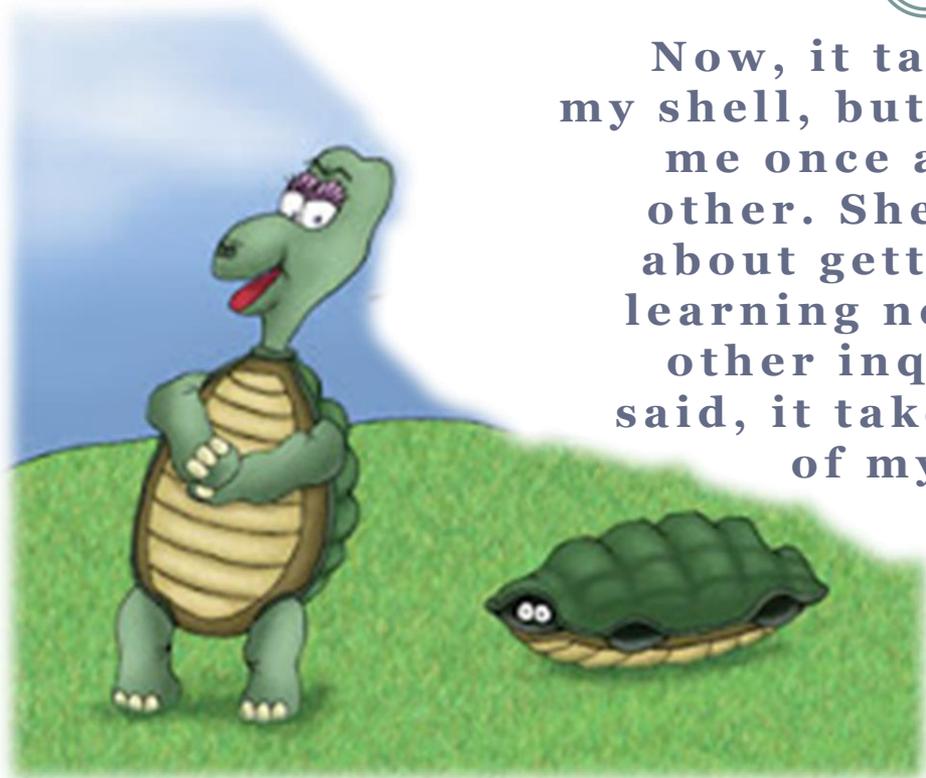
Sean Risatti, the School to Work Alliance Coordinator, was calling to see if I need help getting a job again. I had met him for the first time when I attended Roosevelt High School, but wasn't interested in the program by the time I graduated. He reviewed with me what the SWAP program was and how it might benefit me and my future. I am not sure what it was about this day, but I thought to myself "what harm would it do? There was little risk in the program and through the process I might find a career." So, I decided to work with SWAP and see what jobs might be out there for me.



I worked with SWAP for about a year before I started working with Rebecca Fulenwider, my new SWAP Specialist.



Now, it takes me a while to get out of my shell, but with Rebecca working with me once a week, we got to know each other. She answered all my questions about getting a job, looking for a job, learning new skills in a job, and many other inquiries along the way. Like I said, it takes me a long time to get out of my comfort zone, but once we got past that barrier, I felt like I could trust her.



# A concern of mine was that I didn't just want a job, I wanted a career.



I wanted to be able to get to know the people I work with and work for. I live in a rural community and finding a job became a big challenge not only because of the limited businesses, but because I couldn't see myself working for any of them. I wasn't trained for anything that interested me, and I didn't want to go into a job without knowing what to do. Rebecca and I talked about what training for a job would look like and she reassured me that businesses are looking for people who are willing to learn, but I still wasn't sure.



# I felt like we would never find employment for me.

We toured assembly line facilities, talked about being a courtesy clerk, considered a mail room sorter, and thought about working on a small farm, but they just didn't fit. One day, Rebecca talked to me about working in a library. I had no skills to work in a library, but the idea intrigued me. The environment seemed like it would be nice and I enjoy reading books and expanding my knowledge. Rebecca knew I liked to process information before making a decision, so she left me to think about it until our next meeting.



# Our next meeting was not what you would have expected...



**I thought about working at a library and decided it wasn't the fit for me. I felt overwhelmed at the idea of learning everything about a new job on my first day of work and I couldn't come to put myself into a job where I was going to be a hindrance to those I was working with. Rebecca reviewed how the training process worked, reminded me that entry level positions don't expect you to know it all, and reassured me that I would be able to do it, but I still declined the idea.**

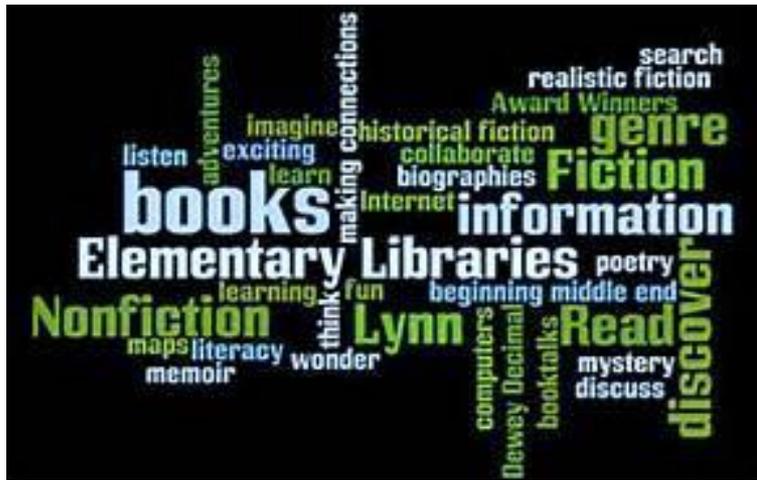
# But there was light at the end of the tunnel!



After another month of trying to find something that interested me, Rebecca mentioned the library page position again. I was still hesitant, but she convinced me the place to start was doing a tour of a library and go from there. So we started on a journey of discovering all about the High Plains Library District and all it has to offer.



# First we took a tour of the facility.



I was intrigued to learn how the library had grown to serve the community. There were several libraries in the Greeley Area, and they all worked together to help people out. If a book you wanted was at another High Plains Library, they would borrow it for you to use. I liked the idea of a

business working together like that. I also enjoyed learning about their different positions. When I first got out of high school, I went directly to AIMS Community College to pursue my education. I didn't finish because I was unsure what I wanted to do for a career. It was nice to know I could go back for a degree in this field if I liked it enough.

# The tour went very well.



So well in fact, I decided I would like to go back and get a feel for what a day would be like as a library page. Rebecca set up a job shadow the next week. She assured me I didn't need to know what I was doing right away, and that was why we would be going on the shadow. I was able to operate their machines that checked in books, stock shelves, check DVD cases, and learn about their system. It was a good time and I started to really feel like I could be good at this.



# After the tour, I thought about the idea of working as a page.



**I made the decision it was something I wanted to pursue. Rebecca and I edited my resume, finessed interview skills, and continued to meet on a weekly basis. Terri Carlson, my DVR Counselor, kept in touch with me as well. I found it nice to talk with so many people about the possibility of finding a career. See, I need to pass information back of forth, not just go to things or be told what to do, and the SWAP and DVR team allowed me to do that through multiple people.**

# Then it happened!



A brand new library was opening in Evans, CO. The Riverside Library. They were hiring a completely new staff. It was exactly what I wanted! “It’s just perfect. I don’t use that word a lot, but there is really no other way to describe it.” I would have the chance to be a part of something starting from the ground up. I wouldn’t have to worry if I didn’t know something, because everyone would be new. Now, to get the job. I couldn’t figure how they would want to hire me since I didn’t have any work experience, but we gave it a shot.

# I got a call about 2 weeks after I put the application in.



**They wanted me to come in for an interview? I really couldn't believe it. At the interview, I felt prepared. I took my time to answer my questions and made sure I did the best I could. They had me do a little test where I organized the books alphabetically and I did really well with that. It was funny, at the end of the interview they stated that they were looking for someone who was meticulous and detail oriented and I had to laugh because that describes me just right.**

# Still, I wasn't sure I was qualified enough to get this job.



I did well in my interview, but if you knew me, you would know that I like to take my time to answer questions and have a hard time opening up to people when I first meet them. I talked to Rebecca and Sean about it and they offered to go in and talk to the ladies I interviewed with. I didn't see the use in it, but didn't see the harm either. I was surprised to hear that the ladies thought I did a good job interviewing and, while they hadn't made any decisions yet, they thought I presented myself well and they enjoyed talking to me. I couldn't believe they even remembered me, let alone enjoyed meeting me. That made me feel really good. I figured, even if I didn't get this job, it was good practice and I felt like I had the confidence to continue looking and interviewing.

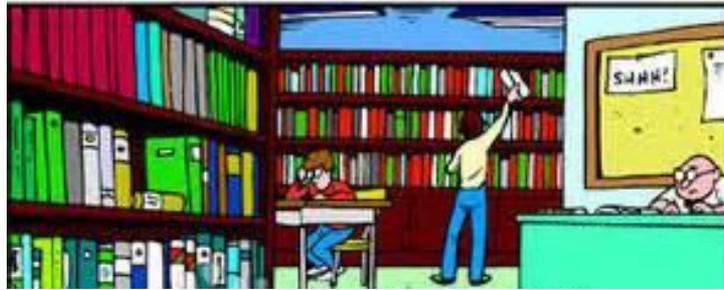
# Then I got the call.

I was offered a position as a library page. I don't remember much of the call and was glad my new boss sent a follow-up e-mail with the details. When I called Rebecca, she cheered for me and stated again and again how happy she was for me and proud she was of me. "For about 15 minutes, my life was just a blur of happiness and a lot of congratulations."



Then reality started to set in. Even though we talked about it, I realized I had never driven to the location of the new library. My anxiety began to rise since I do not like driving on roads I don't know, but Rebecca had a solution. Before my first day of work, she drove with me several times to and from the job location. That new found familiarity really eased my anxiety.

# I've been working for about 4 months now.



I really love my job. I am very proud to be able to say I was here when it opened, well really before it even opened to the public. I think I was able to handle every item on our shelves. I've since learned there is going to be a farmers market in the summer and a community garden out back. It's just perfect for me. "I'm really part of a community here." My manager, Shauna Berry, is just wonderful and makes such a great work environment for us all. She lets us be involved in some of the decisions and seems to really care about us.

# Now with any job, there will be problems...



but my problems were with the rural roads. When I first started there was a lot of construction going on, and I also struggled with a freak rain storm during my first days of training. Rebecca helped me navigate through construction,

encouraged me to take my time on bad weather days, and even checked on me on those days where she knew the weather was bad. I felt good that we went over how to call in due to bad weather and the difference between don't drive in, and okay to drive but give yourself some extra time. I still get a little anxiety when driving, but I feel prepared and I know how to communicate with the library in order to maintain my standing as good employee.

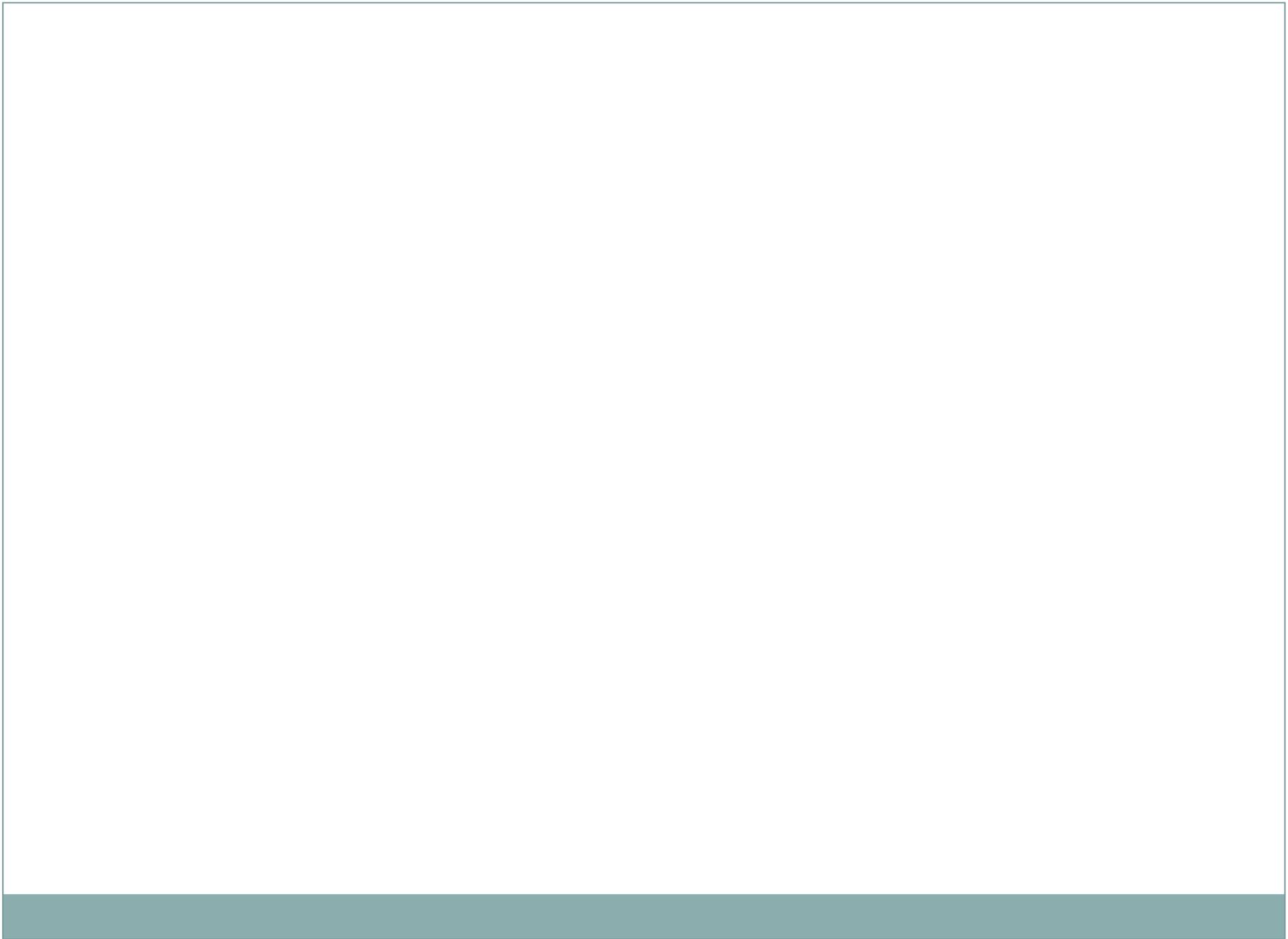
“Man oh man, it just came together with all the parallels.”



Lately I've been thinking about this whole thing and the job shadow was the key. I remember when I was young I wanted to work in a library. I don't remember why, but I remember I did. I care about my patrons that come into the library. I'm learning some of their names and stories and enjoy conversing with them on occasion.



**“It’s hard to explain in words how I feel about it. It feels like I’m meant to be here. I feel like I belong and that’s all I can ask for in a job.”**





## What's happening now?

Charles continues to work at the Riverside Library.

He has expanded his knowledge of library organization and procedures. He recently enjoyed the company holiday party where he was able to share his pickled food, that he canned himself, with his coworkers. When we last met, he beamed of pride when talking about the community where he works. He has enjoyed utilizing the knowledge of the library as well. He expressed that he regularly checks out new materials to expand his knowledge and enjoys seeing what patrons are reading. Right now, he is focusing on learning more about at-home gardening, but is interested in finding some fantasy materials to read. While he doesn't know if he will make a career out of working at the library, he doesn't see himself leaving any time soon.

A special Thank You to Charles Krueger for his willingness to share his story with others, and for the efforts he continually puts forth working with the SWAP and DVR Program.