

Ryan Akers started working at The Arc of Weld County in February 2014 as a Community Ambassador and Office Assistant. His primary job duties encompassed direct marketing to the community, events promotion, and participation, as well as general office management and maintenance. Ryan was really good at his job and his work supported the community to learn more about our agency, the no cost services we provide, and how to access such. Then in March 2020, the pandemic hit and in one day Ryan and his entire team was sent home to work virtually for an unknown period.

It took about three months for Ryan to receive a laptop and training, so he could again return to work but fully virtual. Although Ryan had experience with a desktop computer, the laptop was completely new and operated differently. Undoubtedly the most difficult challenges were related to troubleshooting the new technology. Ryan and his team devised very creative means to overcome such obstacles, such as facetimeing, taking photos, and learning to be very descriptive about the problem. Ryan also had limited experience with Microsoft SharePoint and the agency's calendar, something the team relies heavily upon while working remotely.

Nowadays, Ryan proudly navigates SharePoint independently, keeping the electronic office inventory updated, cutting and pasting narrative content, and even sending his own emails. Working within the expectations of the agency's performance evaluation process, specifically goal setting, Ryan identified his need and desire to expand his knowledge and expertise in Microsoft Word and Excel. He has also become proficient in virtual platforms such as Ring Central and Zoom. "It was a long process learning all the technology" but Ryan is confident in his abilities and remains committed to learning more. His next technology goal is to create his own PowerPoint presentation, as he will be a presenter at the Greeley Area Chamber of Commerce Leads Group in December.

Ryan has also applied his new skills beyond his employment with The Arc of Weld County, as he also owns his own business, Plants Alive. You see, Ryan is an avid horticulturist and has been providing in-home care to plants throughout his community, as well as education regarding landscape maintenance and management, for many years. He often uses Google searches to refresh his memory of various plants and how to care for them most effectively. "I was nervous, I didn't grow up with computers and now I am learning it all." With his newfound confidence, he can now really make his personal business grow!