

For generations, people have come to the United States in pursuit of opportunity. Each person dreaming his or her own unique dreams, planning for his or her own unique goals, but driven by a shared belief that success is possible here – that life can be different and things will be better if you work hard and stick to it.



Renzo Cordero moved to Detroit in search of greater opportunities for employment. He completed Goodwill's Flip the Script Program and began a full time position with Green Works, Inc. 8 months ago. He credits Goodwill with helping him get back on his feet after a period of homelessness.

So it was for Renzo Cordero when he arrived in Detroit a few years ago from his native Puerto Rico. By Renzo's own account, he was desperate for a fresh start. He had lived in America for a couple of years as a teenager and was eager to return. He had no family connections stateside but a friend knew a friend in Michigan who suggested he try to make a go of it in Detroit. He reasoned, correctly or not, that industry always needs laborers – even when times are tight.

Renzo recalls his first few days in town and says, "I was excited to be in the United States. It seemed like the best chance for me but pretty quickly I discovered that the people my friend thought might help me were really just going to be a bad influence." He explains, "They were up to no good and honestly, that's not why I came here. I came to Detroit to be a success... to make something out of my life."

A natural born optimist, Renzo was determined to keep his hopes high, but gradually reality settled in. Within months, he was homeless – completely alone in an unfamiliar city with no contacts or network of support. It was scary. It was humbling. It was not at all what he had planned.

"I ended up in a temporary shelter," he says, "and I started attending a church that took an interest in me. They had a more permanent place I

could stay. It was a transitional house... definitely nothing fancy but it was a safe place to stay and it gave me time to start figuring things out."

Renzo says one of the people he met through the church referred him to Goodwill. He smiles as he shares, "They told me all about Flip the Script and how it helps young people get the training and support needed to enter the work force. I thought, wow, that is exactly what I need so I decided to check it out."

He enrolled in Flip the Script and completed the program between March and June of 2011. Renzo says the coaching and mentoring he received from Goodwill were valuable.

He explains, "My English skills were average but needed improvement and it had been a long time since I'd finished high school... I needed to brush up on my math skills, too. Through Goodwill's program I had a chance to do that and also gain the confidence that has helped me get to where I am today."



Renzo talks with his supervisor, Marvin, outside the Green Works plant as they arrive to begin another shift. He says the job is giving him a chance to learn skills and gain confidence that will serve him well throughout his work life.



Green Works serves customers like DTE Energy to recycle and renew resources that include retired meters, transformers and power lines.

Today, Renzo is employed full time as a recycling worker by Goodwill's Green Works, Inc. Since starting here 8 months ago, he's had a chance to learn a variety of roles at the plant and likes the wide range of tasks he is assigned. He says no two days of work are ever the same.

Formed in 2010, Goodwill's Green Works, Inc. provides cost-saving, environmentally friendly asset recovery and recycling services for Michigan utilities, as well as industrial and manufacturing companies. Goodwill established Green Works to create Detroit-area jobs in the growing "green" sector and generate revenue to support its job preparedness training programs.

One of Green Works' major customers is DTE Energy. For DTE, Green Works processes metals from transformers, power lines and other assets to their purest form for recycling, repurposing or commodity market sale. Green Works also harvests mineral oil from retired transformers and returns it to DTE for use in energy production.

Green Works offers employment and training to dozens of Goodwill clients each year. In 2011, the operation diverted more than 4 million pounds of metal and other materials from landfills. Since launching just two years ago, it has been honored by the Detroit Free Press as a Michigan Green Leader and recognized by the U.S. Department of Commerce for successfully implementing sustainable manufacturing processes.

As he walks through the plant, Renzo explains his job with pride. "Some days, I am removing old wiring from its protective sleeve and other days I get to disassemble street lights or electric meters so they can be recycled. No matter what I do, I use this as an opportunity to learn how to work with others, take direction from my boss and show leadership when I'm responsible for something. It's really great."

Working at Green Works is allowing him to save for a permanent home. He's recently purchased a car and is glad to finally have transportation around town. Eventually, Renzo hopes to enter a vocational training program or apprenticeship to learn a trade as a plumber or electrician. But for now, he's happy here. He is content to have steady work and a chance to grow.

At 26, Renzo is full of life. He is courteous and soft spoken but clearly passionate about his dreams. Renzo pauses to reflect, "When you come from where I came from, I think you just appreciate things more. I thank God for this job and for Goodwill and for the way they are helping me become independent."



Renzo is proud to be working full time and says he's grateful that a friend referred him to Goodwill when he wasn't sure where else to turn.

"It feels great to accomplish each step toward my goals... even the small ones. Because I know that everything I achieve will be the result of hard work. It won't be handed down to me. I'm going to earn it with Goodwill helping me along the way."



Learn more about clients like Renzo Cordero on Goodwill's YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/goodwilldetroitpr>

Scan the QR code to go there now!