

# I Can See Past Survival Mode Now

**ASHLEY SEAL** grew up in Portsmouth, Ohio, a town she describes as “rough around the edges but filled with honest and hardworking people.”

Ashley’s parents were factory workers, but one day her mom got her degree and it changed everything. Ashley was inspired to further her education after that and obtained her business degree in 2018. But finding a job wasn’t easy in the town of Portsmouth.

**“I had student debt to pay and working a minimum wage job can’t cover those costs. I applied to one-hundred jobs in a six-month period, and getting rejection after rejection started to wear down on me.”**

## TAKING A CHANCE ON SOMETHING NEW

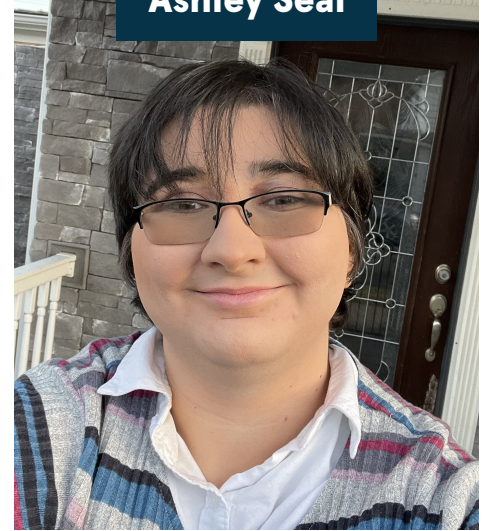
Ashley remembers seeing a post through Ohio Means Jobs and The GRIT Project and she responded to the post, but wasn’t sure what would happen next.

“I got a response asking if I was interested in learning more and after taking some career assessments, I got an interview with the company I’m with today.”

Ashley completed a free, online career assessment through The GRIT Project and Future Plans, which led to her interview with Pearl Interactive Network, where she works remotely today. It was also through the career assessment that Ashley realized she had been living with autism and certain career paths might prove more favorable for her working preferences than others. She is grateful for the chance to work from home as it allows her to be her true self and do her best work.

**“I was finally able to do something I hadn’t been able to do since I graduated, and that was take care of myself, pay my bills, and make a livable wage. Plus, I realized I’m really good in a customer support role.”**

**Ashley Seal**



Read more stories like Ashley’s at [www.skillup.org](http://www.skillup.org).



## THE POWER OF REMOTE WORK IN THE REGION

“Remote work opportunities are helping our town and changing our community for the better. These jobs are helping good people who want to find ways to support themselves and their families. I knew that I always wanted the chance to work from home, but I didn’t think remote work could happen here and it has.

“Having autism doesn’t make the job search or working in an office environment any easier. You have to ‘mask’ who you are to make others feel comfortable. Remote work gives people like me a chance to succeed at what we do.”

## AND ENDLESS AMOUNT OF OPPORTUNITIES

Pearl Interactive Network provided Ashley with on-the-job training when she started. She learned about the customer service space, phone etiquette, and how to run the system. She also received two monitors, a laptop, and headset so she had what she needed to be successful. Ashley loves the supportive remote environment that Pearl provides for its employees.

**“You never feel like you’re alone and it’s hard to fail with safety nets in place.”**

At Pearl, Ashley knows that her coworkers are there to help her and her supervisors are there to support her. It’s all about everyone working together to provide the best experience for the clients.

“You don’t have to be a people person to love this job. I’m the least social person I know and I love working in customer support, hearing stories, and meeting people from all different places. Remote roles, like mine, are all about giving people chances and now I’m seeing opportunities pop up for everyone around me. A rising tide lifts all boats.”

Within a year of working at Pearl, Ashley was able to buy a brand new home for her family which was a huge milestone after her family lost their home to a fire in 2015.

## A STEPPING STONE FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

Ashley knows she isn’t going to stop here as she has plans to keep propelling herself and her career forward. She’s currently studying animation online with the hopes of one day working in television or opening up her own animation business.

In the meantime, Ashley is keeping busy by helping Portsmouth get back on its feet. She is hoping to open an art supply store in town so that she can give back to her local community. And she credits all that she’s been able to accomplish to the confidence she’s gained working at Pearl.

“I’m inspired to seize every opportunity and run with it. I can finally see past survival mode and want to plan for the future. Pearl has been a great stepping stone and they gave me a chance when no one else would. For the first time in my life, I feel like I’m thriving.”

For others considering remote work, Ashley would tell them, “Remember that you’re worth a lot more than you give yourself credit for. You can do so much more than you’ve dreamed, so when an opportunity comes your way, seize it and run with it.” ■

**Founded in November 2021, LevelUp GRIT Ohio brings together existing partnerships founded by The GRIT Project in 2018 to include those of Future Plans and Ohio Means Jobs.**

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**THE GRIT  
PROJECT**

The goal of LevelUp GRIT Ohio is to help educate the local community on growing industries and directly connect workers to training programs, career resources and navigation, coaching and financial support, and job opportunities that are available throughout Southern Ohio.

**Learn more at [www.levelupgritohio.org](http://www.levelupgritohio.org).**

