



Rising Star – Johnny Walker

Job Corps Graduate and USDA, Forest Service Employee

The Forest Service – It’s Where I want to Be!

In November 2008, Johnny Walker began his career with Shawnee National Forest, Hidden Springs Ranger District, as a GS-3 Forestry/Fire Technician. “I love the adventure of my work...each day brings a new challenge,” says Johnny. He enjoys the camaraderie with his co-workers and travelling to new places in the U.S.



“People ask me if I miss my family who now live 8^{1/2} hours away,” says Johnny. “I tell them that the Forest Service has become a family to me. That’s something I never expected but greatly value.”

Mr. Walker grew up in southern Mississippi in a small rural town with a population around 1,000. He has three sisters and one older brother. Standing at 6’2”, his dream as a young man was to be in the NBA. But like many youth from small communities, the challenges of daily life forced him to ‘grow up fast’ and set aside his boyhood dream for more practical pursuits.

Job Corps – I Learned a Skill and Found a Career!

Mr. Walker was 21 when he joined the Flatwoods Civilian Conservation Center in Coeburn, Virginia. He said, “Job Corps gave me a great foundation and was a stepping stone for me.” Johnny completed the

Johnny has assisted in the prescribe burning of 3200 acres on the forest, he has been on five assignments with the Midewin Hotshot crew and spent 30 days in Alaska with the hotshots.

Schenck Civilian Conservation Corps Advanced Fire Management Program and received a Certificate of Completion for the Davidson River Initial Attack Crew. He credits Job Corps with teaching him technical skills, helping him develop a strong work ethic, and imparting to him the value of always maintaining a positive outlook.

Mentors Were a Big Part of My Success

Clara Johnson, Forest Service Job Corps Liaison, played a significant role in his choice to pursue a career with the forest service. Walker met Clara at the NFL recruitment fair in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. “I didn’t even know the Forest Service existed until I joined the Job Corps,” he said. “Clara took the time to get to know me as a person. She also encouraged me to take this opportunity to make a better life for myself. No one has ever done that before.”

Since working for the Forest Service, Walker has had the benefit of being mentored by several excellent people like Jodie Baxter and Anthony Conte. “I learned how to take responsibility, to be accountable, and how to organize my life to achieve more,” he said.”



My Future Looks Great

Mr. Walker is attending John A. Logan Community College and will obtain his associate’s degree in forest science in 2014, at which time he will be promoted to a GS-5, full time employee. He later plans to transfer to Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, where he will pursue his Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry.

“I plan on making a lifelong career with the Forest Service. It’s such an exciting opportunity with so many avenues – like being a smoke jumper!” he said.

