

A Security Professional Redefining Perceptions: Meet Dawson Coder



For Dawson Coder, an Allied Universal security professional at Adventist Health Portland in Oregon his role is more than just communicating rules – it's about changing perceptions. "When I walk in with a badge and the vest, many people immediately expect conflict," he shares. "But I love being able to help change that narrative." Dawson strives to embody the compassionate side of security, approaching his job with an outlook that sees everyone as more than their circumstances.

Having grown up in Portland, Dawson began working for Allied Universal at the suggestion of his mother, who works for Adventist Health. His easy-going demeanor and natural empathy have made him a standout, not just to his supervisors but to the countless patients and staff he interacts with daily.

A Different Kind of Security Officer

For many, the sight of a security guard can cause apprehension, but Dawson aims to shift that point of view. "I think part of why people respond to me is that I see them differently. I don't go in with any preconceived ideas," he says. "I try to remember that everyone has their own story. No one knows what someone else has been through to get them to this point." This mindset has proven invaluable, especially in the fast-paced environment of the hospital's emergency department, where emotions often run high.

In one incident, Dawson received recognition for his compassion while assisting a patient who became agitated when receiving medication. He used therapeutic communication techniques to calm the patient, ensuring they felt safe and cared for. "I just talked with them, listened and tried to make them feel like I see them as a person," he recalls.

Seeing People Beyond Their Circumstances

Dawson's approach stems from a deep-seated belief in treating people with kindness and dignity, no matter their background. "I try to remember that the person I'm helping was a kid once. You never know the challenges they've faced along the way," he reflects. "That perspective helps me stay grounded."

Dawson's compassion extends to everyone he meets. In one case, he offered to help a patient with bed bugs, even though it wasn't his job. He took the time to thoroughly decontaminate the patient, treating them with compassion and dignity. This simple act exemplifies his commitment to treating all people with respect.

Life Beyond the Vest

Outside of work, Dawson enjoys spending time with his girlfriend and their golden retrievers, Keikoa and Pretzel. He loves fishing, baseball and attending Portland Trail Blazers games. He also serves as a youth leader for Young Life, a role that's important to him and reflects his passion for connecting with others.



His positive presence isn't limited to his personal life. He has been recognized for regularly assisting patients with mobility challenges, rushing out with wheelchairs to help them navigate the parking lot and ensuring they reach the hospital safely. Dawson was also acknowledged for going above and beyond when he helped a patient in active labor reach the family birth center, where she gave birth just 15 minutes later.

His supervisor recalls a time when Dawson responded to a child custody dispute taking place at the hospital. With law enforcement enroute and things heating up between the two parties, Dawson took two young children to a side table to make paper airplanes, distracting them from what was happening between their parents.

A Positive Force in a Challenging World

Dawson is committed to not just keeping Adventist Health Portland safe but also making it a welcoming environment for everyone who walks through its doors. His work serves as a reminder that security professionals can do more than protect; they can uplift and inspire, changing how people see them – and each other.

"People need good," he says, reflecting on the challenging environment of the ER, where oftentimes people are experiencing the worst day of their lives or are in crisis. "I try to be a place of positivity because, sometimes, that's all someone needs."

Dawson's dedication was recognized in 2023 when he was awarded the Lou Liguori Award, Allied Universal's Good Citizen of the Year honor. The award celebrates his exceptional contributions to the hospital and the wider community, recognizing his role as a compassionate, reliable and exemplary security professional.

As he looks ahead, Dawson is driven by the desire to continue growing, both personally and professionally, with a simple yet profound goal: to make people feel seen, understood and cared for. "You're not alone," he often tells those he encounters, a message he wishes he'd heard more often when he was younger. And through his work, he's making sure others hear it loud and clear.