

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS
HARRISON DIVISION

AARON G. WOODS

PLAINTIFF

v.

CIVIL NO. 19-3006

ANDREW M. SAUL,¹ Commissioner
Social Security Administration

DEFENDANT

MEMORANDUM OPINION

Plaintiff, Aaron G. Woods, brings this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), seeking judicial review of a decision of the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (Commissioner) denying his claim for supplemental security income (SSI) benefits under the provisions of Title XVI of the Social Security Act (Act). In this judicial review, the Court must determine whether there is substantial evidence in the administrative record to support the Commissioner's decision. See 42 U.S.C. § 405(g).

Plaintiff protectively filed his current application for SSI on December 21, 2015, alleging an inability to work due to a low IQ, depression, cognitive problems, bipolar disorder, a special learning disorder of written expression, low intellectual functioning, behavior and anger issues, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and a lumbar spine problem. (Tr. 123-124, 231). An administrative hearing was held on April 13, 2017, at which Plaintiff appeared with counsel and testified. (Tr. 67-121).

¹ Andrew M. Saul, has been appointed to serve as Commissioner of Social Security, and is substituted as Defendant, pursuant to Rule 25(d)(1) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

By written decision dated June 28, 2018, the ALJ found that during the relevant time period, Plaintiff had an impairment or combination of impairments that were severe. (Tr. 19). Specifically, the ALJ found Plaintiff had the following severe impairments: a specific learning disorder in reading, math, and spelling; borderline intellectual functioning; bipolar disorder/unspecified episodic mood disorder; unspecified personality disorder; oppositional defiant disorder; and intermittent explosive disorder. However, after reviewing all of the evidence presented, the ALJ determined that Plaintiff's impairments did not meet or equal the level of severity of any impairment listed in the Listing of Impairments found in Appendix I, Subpart P, Regulation No. 4. (Tr. 19). The ALJ found Plaintiff retained the residual functional capacity (RFC) to:

perform a full range of work at all exertional levels but with the following nonexertional limitations: the claimant cannot climb ladders, ramps, or stairs; the claimant must avoid concentrated exposure to hazards; and the claimant is able to perform unskilled work where interpersonal contact with coworkers and supervisors is incidental to the work performed and there is no contact with the public, where the complexity of tasks is learned and performed by rote, with few variables and little judgment, and where the supervision required is simple, direct, and concrete.

(Tr. 22). With the help of a vocational expert, the ALJ determined Plaintiff could perform work as a machine packager, a prep cook, a price marking clerk, a hotel/motel housekeeper, a document preparer and an addresser. (Tr. 28-29).

Plaintiff then requested a review of the hearing decision by the Appeals Council, which denied that request on January 2, 2019. (Tr. 1-7). Subsequently, Plaintiff filed this action. (Doc. 2). This case is before the undersigned pursuant to the consent of the parties. (Doc. 5). Both parties have filed appeal briefs, and the case is now ready for decision. (Docs. 13, 14).

This Court's role is to determine whether the Commissioner's findings are supported by substantial evidence on the record as a whole. Ramirez v. Barnhart, 292 F.3d 576, 583 (8th Cir. 2002). Substantial evidence is less than a preponderance but it is enough that a reasonable mind would find it adequate to support the Commissioner's decision. The ALJ's decision must be affirmed if the record contains substantial evidence to support it. Edwards v. Barnhart, 314 F.3d 964, 966 (8th Cir. 2003). As long as there is substantial evidence in the record that supports the Commissioner's decision, the Court may not reverse it simply because substantial evidence exists in the record that would have supported a contrary outcome, or because the Court would have decided the case differently. Haley v. Massanari, 258 F.3d 742, 747 (8th Cir. 2001). In other words, if after reviewing the record it is possible to draw two inconsistent positions from the evidence and one of those positions represents the findings of the ALJ, the decision of the ALJ must be affirmed. Young v. Apfel, 221 F.3d 1065, 1068 (8th Cir. 2000).

The Court has reviewed the entire transcript and the parties' briefs. For the reasons stated in the ALJ's well-reasoned opinion and the Government's brief, the Court finds Plaintiff's arguments on appeal to be without merit and finds that the record as a whole reflects substantial evidence to support the ALJ's decision. Accordingly, the ALJ's decision is hereby summarily affirmed and Plaintiff's Complaint is dismissed with prejudice. See Sledge v. Astrue, No. 08-0089, 2008 WL 4816675 (W.D. Mo. Oct. 31, 2008) (summarily affirming ALJ's denial of disability benefits), aff'd, 364 Fed. Appx. 307 (8th Cir. 2010).

DATED this 4th day of February 2020.

/s/ Erin L. Wiedemann

HON. ERIN L. WIEDEMANN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE