

Careers Industries

Enriching the lives of people with disabilities

Quarterly News

JULY 2013



Best Buy Looks to Careers Industries for Diverse Talent

“Good help is hard to find so limiting the resources you use to find quality applicants isn’t in the best interest of most organizations,” advises Best Buy General Manager Brian Odeja. “I believe if you don’t have a relationship with an organization that can help you with your diversity than you are missing out on some great applicants.”



That’s why Brian and the Best Buy store at 2710 S. Green Bay Rd. in Mount Pleasant have worked with Careers Industries’ Partners in Employment (PIE) Program for more than two years. PIE, in partnership with the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), connects employers with pre-screened, qualified applicants who also happen to have disabilities. *(Read more about DVR on page 5.)*

“Whether or not they have a disability isn’t a factor as long they have a passion for technology and are interested in providing top notch customer service,” explains Odeja. “We try to look for employees specifically who like to have fun, enjoy technology and can help customers use technology to improve lives. PIE only brings applicants to me that have a passion for the job, and the qualifications and skill set to be successful here.”

One of those individuals was 32-year-old William, a Dean’s List student at Gateway Technical College studying information technology. First, PIE arranged for a paid work experience (or internship) for Best Buy’s Geek Squad customer tech support team. The internship was funded by DVR. Then in February, William was hired as an official employee.

“William is someone who was given an opportunity to show that he is a qualified candidate and now is a good employee for Best Buy. He fits in very well not only with Geek Squad but also across the entire store. People know and respect him,” says Odeja. “He has a very good work ethic. He takes initiative. He loves to learn. He has had a positive impact on the employee and customer experience.”

William has done such an outstanding job that he received a Best Buy “Geek Squad Precinct Award” for outstanding client service.



Speed Interviewing

Seven PIE participants got a chance to hone their interviewing skills and meet with three local businesses during a May speed networking session. To prepare, the PIE team held mock interview sessions. Pictured: PIE’s Christina, Trish and Ashlee provide some last minute advice to Hillary.

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The caring nature of our staff extends beyond their work with our participants. Members of our PIE team Genie, Trish, Christina and Brian (Genie's nephew) participated in the Best Buddies Milwaukee Walk and raised more than \$600.



Case Manager Emily donates blood during one of our two annual blood drives.

Director's Message

Changing political and social views continue to concern Careers Industries. As we've noted in previous newsletters, there is growing demand for changes that we believe will limit opportunities for persons with disabilities. These include eliminating Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the Special Minimum Wage Certificate which could put hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities out of work.



The issue was muddled further when it was addressed as part of TV news program exposé on Goodwill Industries. Lost in the discussion were critical points made by the organization's CEO previously in a thoughtful Huffington Post column including:

"The certificate...issued under section 14(c) of the FLSA... allows employers to pay commensurate wages to employees whose disabilities significantly impair their productivity; sometimes this means that they are paid less than the federal minimum wage. While it is quite easy to look at this provision quickly and ask why people with disabilities should be paid less than other workers, the truth is the certificate allows ... employers to provide opportunities for people with severe disabilities who otherwise might not be a part of the workforce. It helps many people find the best possible employment for them and it is a highly regulated and vital component of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

"This certificate is an important tool that is used by more than 3,400 employers nationwide to help individuals with significant and multiple disabilities to gain and maintain employment. For thousands of people with the most significant disabilities, it means the difference between reaching their full employment potential and having no job at all."

That's what mother Amy Ochowicz fears for her daughter Maggie. "Since January, a team of teachers and vocational experts have been diligently seeking community-based employment opportunities for my daughter, based on her skill level. The offers are not pouring in. With Section 14(c) in place, however, there are other options for her. There are places that can offer employment opportunities for my daughter, where she is able to continue to reach her full employment potential while being gainfully employed, even if the pay is less than minimum wage."

I urge you to visit www.careersindustries.org/preservesect14.htm to learn more about this issue and how we can preserve and protect employment for persons with disabilities.

Sincerely, Joe Greene



Dave Koenig (center) of Piggly Wiggly with Michael (left) and Andy (right).

Piggly Wiggly Owner Feels Lucky with New Employees

Dave Koenig, owner and operator of the Piggly Wiggly grocery at 3900 Erie St. Racine doesn't post Help Wanted signs or purchase ads to find store associates. Instead he always accepts applications from interested candidates. Two such associates that Dave hired this past year were 20 year-old Andy and 46 year-old Michael, both participants in Careers Industries' Partners in Employment (PIE) program.

PIE partners with the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to match savvy, progressive employers like Koenig—who understands the value of a diverse workforce—with persons with disabilities who have the requested skills and talents.

"We don't view Andy and Michael any differently than any other associate. They are part of our team and treated the same as everybody else," Koenig explained. "We didn't hire them for a pat on the back. These are two good individuals that are fulfilling a role we needed to fill and we look forward to having them for a long time."

Koenig considers his store lucky to find such valuable employees. "For some people grocery is not a glamour job but Andy and Michael show quite a bit of pride in what they do. They enjoy coming to work every day and have self-satisfaction in what they are doing."

Both Andy and Michael first went through paid internships at Piggly Wiggly funded by DVR with onsite job coaching provided by Careers Industries. "The coaching was outstanding and a blessing," Koenig said. "As store owner and operator, my time is spread very thin. The coaching allowed us to focus on the other aspects of our business while the coaches helped developed the interns into employees we could bring on staff."

Greater Grain Provides Valuable Job and Training Experiences

In just a little over a year, nine participants have already completed our S.H.a.R.E (Service, Handling and Retail Experience) training program (or internship) at our specialty grocery Greater Grain Gluten-free Goods. The 4-week internship is a paid program funded by DVR.

"DVR purchases occupational skills training from a variety of partners and business to help job candidates gain necessary work experience and skills training in a real-world work environment," explains Patricia Johnson, Director of DVR for Kenosha, Racine and Walworth Counties. "Programs like S.H.a.R.E. prepare candidates to compete for jobs in this sector in the community."

Participants get hands on experience interacting with customers in person and on the phone, stocking and doing inventory, using the cash registers and other tasks. Our two most recent store interns were Leahyonna Carver and Tony Jackson.



Tony points out some of the store's many healthy snacks.



Leahyonna prepares samples.

Summer Picnic

Our summer picnic is held annually for the organization's more than 300 participants and staff members. Our participants look forward to this event every year. Just like other company picnics, participants and staff mingle with friends, eat good food, play games and celebrate the summer.

There were lots of S-M-I-L-E-S during B-I-N-G-O. Nancy and Andrea, a volunteer, Randy and another volunteer from Best Buy.



Best Buy General Manager Brian Odeja (right) volunteers as a referee for the minnow races while Danny and Tyson cheer on their minnows.



Kay picks her aim for ring toss



Jessie rolls up his sleeve for some temporary "ink." Best Buy employee William volunteers at the temporary tattoo station.



Ralph rolls the big dice as Fred looks on.

Partnership Focused on Employment

A vital element of Careers Industries Partners in Employment (PIE) program is our partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for Kenosha, Racine and Walworth Counties. The DVR is a division of the state's Department of Workforce Development and assists individuals with disability obtain, retain and advance in employment. DVR subcontracts with organizations like Careers Industries to fulfill a dual approach—serve individuals who want to work and connect them to businesses who need talent.



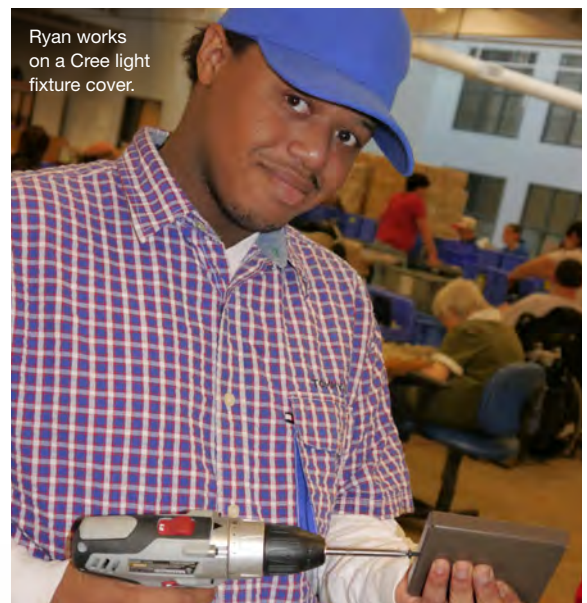
“The best reason to hire an individual with disability is not because of disability but because of abilities and talents they bring to help build a strong workforce,” says Patricia Johnson, Director of DVR for Kenosha, Racine and Walworth Counties. “The DVR/Careers Industries talent pool provides businesses with a great opportunity to connect to qualified candidates that have been prescreened and typically have been through substantial training.”

Johnson notes that many of the job seekers that DVR and Careers Industries introduced to hiring organizations have completed college or occupation specific skilled training programs. There are financial benefits as well for businesses that recruit employees through Careers Industries and DVR. These include tax credit opportunities and funding for internships/training programs and for accommodations needed to support persons with disabilities on the job. Businesses also benefit from ongoing support and consultation by having a professional relationship with disability experts.



Racine Founders Rotary Club presents Careers Industries with a \$2,500 donation. The money was raised at the club's annual Vegas Night.

Pictured: Larry Vail, left, club president, and Bill Seidel, right, past president of Rotary.



Ryan works on a Cree light fixture cover.

Fulfillment Services Sees Steady Work for Participants; No Sign of Summer Slowdown

Work opportunities for participants in our Fulfillment Services program have remained steady this summer as we've seen few signs of a the typical “summer shutdown” that have occurred at many of our sub-contract customers in the past. Fulfillment services provides our participants with meaningful work and skills development opportunities in a supportive environment.

We completed a job for Click Clack that required removing a UPC label, applying two new labels and then repackaging nearly 20,000 canisters. For long-time customer Insinkerator we started a new stopper assembly job that represents about 40,000 pieces annually and continue to assemble between 22,000 and 23,000 switches a day.

Business from Bombardier Recreational Products (BRP) has increased. Our participants assemble a wide variety of “owner kits” comprised of various engine parts and instruction sheets. We also do light assembly of hydraulic tubing lines and steering components. Orders remain steady from Lakeland Supply. We build and send 60 shipping containers every three weeks. And for Cordstrap, we package about 80 boxes of buckles per day.

For these and our other customers, sub-contracting with Careers Industries keeps basic skills, repetitive type of tasks that need to get done here in our community instead of being outsourced elsewhere.

Praise for Greater Grain Gluten-Free Goods

Inside this issue read how Greater Grain is providing valuable retail and customer service career experience for persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, the rave reviews customers post on Facebook continue:

“Stopped into your store today after my Mom told me about it. What a great place!! Wonderful, helpful and knowledgeable staff...bonus that your profits help support others in your community. Will definitely be back:)”

—Lori Larson

“I am soooo excited to have found you!!! Can't wait to come and shop!”

—Heather Schweitzer



Your support is welcome...

When you support Careers Industries, you're not just supporting persons with disabilities—you're supporting educational, training and employment opportunities; economic development; and health and social services in our community. You can donate online safely and securely at our web site or mail in this form to Careers Industries, 4811 Washington Ave, Racine, WI 53406.

- Here is my gift of \$_____ made payable to Careers Industries Support Fund
- In memory of _____
- In honor of _____ to commemorate _____

Gift from

NAME _____

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Above: In recognition of Autism Awareness Day Heather, Jessie and Tyler paint puzzle pieces to create pins.

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Stop by and visit us at:

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www.careersindustries.org

Learn more at:

staffing needs.

We also help local organizations and businesses meet their business and

Careers Industries enriches the lives of people with disabilities through work, care and community.

