



NEWS RELEASE

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2018 DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION AWARDS

Four Nebraska VR partners received awards for their role in creating inclusive workplaces and advocacy for disability employment during a ceremony October 9 at the State Capitol.

Entrepreneur Award for Disability Employment and Inclusion Award: Toby Mickelson, Old West Radon – Kearney, NE

Toby Mickelson is enthusiastic, customer-oriented, and wants to educate the public about the dangers of radon. He owns Old West Radon in Kearney, Nebraska where he specializes in radon measurement and mitigation. After a lower back injury on the job in 2010, he was unable to return to operating heavy equipment. A friend in real estate suggested the idea of radon management and mitigation. After completing the coursework through the Kansas State University, Toby received his certification and licensing requirements for Nebraska. He then worked with Nebraska VR Employment Specialist Marcia Haynes to coordinate a feasibility study and create a business plan. The self-employment services he received were a critical support to Toby's strengths, transferable skills, and abilities, enabling him to turn a profit in his second year of business. Toby is currently investing in cutting edge equipment to set himself apart from other providers.

Small Business Recognition Award for Disability Employment and Inclusion Award: Columbus Care and Rehabilitation Center – Columbus, NE

The Columbus Care and Rehabilitation Center in Columbus, Nebraska offers a wide range of health care services to adults recovering from serious injuries and chronic illness. With both long and short-term nursing care and an assisted living wing, they have partnered with Nebraska VR to meet staffing needs over the course of several years. More recently they have provided many work-based learning experiences to clients including job shadows, business tours, informational interviews, and on-the-job evaluations. The Center employs just under 100 employees and has hired five clients over the last year, making the business a model to other employers who seek to foster an inclusive workplace and fill positions with qualified job candidates.

Large Business Recognition Award for Disability Employment and Inclusion Award: West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc. – Kearney, NE

West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc., in Kearney, Nebraska, one of more than 30 locations worldwide, is a designer and manufacturer of pharmaceutical packaging and delivery systems. West Pharmaceutical has completed a variety of on-the-job evaluations, job shadows, and tours. The Kearney location employs more than 160 and has

hired more than ten Nebraska VR clients in the past year. They have referred more than twenty existing employees to Nebraska VR's Career Pathways Advancement Project Grant to help incumbent workers advance within the company. Human Resource Director Mike Bursaw goes out of his way to share information with clients about the hiring process and the types of jobs available. He has participated in employer panels, presented employer perspectives at the local service office, and hosted disability awareness training at the plant. Mike ensures appropriate accommodations are in place, when needed, as part of an overall commitment for applicants and employees to have equal access to meaningful work.

Individual Champion for Disability Employment and Inclusion Award: Dr. John J. Curran – Norfolk, NE

Dr. John J. Curran has worked closely with Nebraska VR staff members, applicants, and clients for more than 30 years providing comprehensive psychological evaluations of individuals who experience mental health disabilities in northeast Nebraska. The assessments have been a valuable tool in identifying client needs and required supports for successful employment. Additionally, he has gone above and beyond providing training to staff, follow-up consultations, and answers to questions free of charge. In a partnership spanning over three decades, his professional contributions have helped hundreds of individuals.

Nebraska Lt. Governor Mike Foley participated in the celebration. "It is an honor and a privilege to be part of recognizing businesses and individuals who demonstrate leadership in employing people with disabilities," said Lt. Governor Mike Foley. "Businesses can learn by their example to adopt inclusive hiring practices."

"Recognizing individuals and employers who have embraced inclusion to build successful Nebraska workplaces is a celebration of leadership. Your willingness to give back to your community by assisting others is a model for others." Nebraska Department of Education Deputy Commissioner Brian Halstead spoke of the those receiving the award. He also recognized Nebraska VR staff members who provide employment services to clients and businesses.

"I enjoy the opportunity to recognize these individuals and businesses during October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month. All the awardees exemplify this year's theme 'America's Workforce: Empowering All'," Nebraska VR Director Lindy Foley noted. "Their dedication and persistence are a model for others. The recognition they are receiving today is well deserved."

The Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) selected the recipients from nominees submitted by Nebraska VR Business Account Managers and Employment Specialists. The awards are presented during October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The Council is comprised of individuals who have an interest in working with Nebraska VR to ensure the needs of Nebraskan who experience a disability are met in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

The 2018 Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards highlight the successful partnership between Nebraska VR and the businesses and communities they serve. Nebraska VR offers individualized programs to help people with disabilities find employment consistent with their interests, priorities, strengths, talents, and choices while working with businesses to find and keep quality employees. Nebraska VR is a division of the Nebraska Department of Education. To learn more about Nebraska VR, visit the website at: <http://vr.nebraska.gov/>.

Photos are available using the following

link. https://drive.google.com/open?id=11X8wbaXLtbqPsfjJF0auZ_aISuG4qS3h

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