



NEWS RELEASE

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2019 DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION AWARDS

Photos are available using the following link.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14Ffpr7kGzfaF5kykiy_ZEciEO-ZbHXFF?usp=sharing

Five Nebraska VR partners received awards for their role in creating inclusive workplaces and advocacy for disability employment during a ceremony October 8th at the Nebraska State Capitol.

The 2019 Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards highlight the successful partnership between Nebraska VR and the businesses and communities they serve. Nebraska VR offers individualized services 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.

The award winners are:

Disability Employment and Inclusion Entrepreneur Award:

Janie York, Hear Now, Mobile Hearing Solutions – Omaha, NE

Janie York has a high energy level, strong attention to detail, and is determined to be successful with her business. She owns Hear Now, Mobile Hearing Solutions in Omaha where she travels to her clients to provide hearing aid services for individuals who may have transportation challenges or reside in a care facility. As someone who has experienced a hearing loss, she says she is passionate about helping people to hear and communicate to the best of their ability. Through Nebraska VR's self-employment program, she received business start-up funds for supplies, additional education, testing fees, guidance, and record keeping assistance. Since launching her business in August 2017, she has achieved profitability and more than doubled her business plan net income goal. Janie actively gives back to the community she serves. She conducts regular device drives to collect used, broken, and unwanted hearing aids to be refurbished and distributed to individuals in need.

Disability Employment and Inclusion New Business Partner Recognition Award:

Black Cow Fat Pig Pub & Steak – Norfolk, NE

Black Cow Fat Pig Pub & Steak owners Michael and Amber Behrens became acquainted with Nebraska VR through an informational meeting with Nebraska VR Business Account Manager Angela Korth. After learning more about Black Cow Fat Pig as a business, their staffing needs, required qualifications, and how, as a business, they wanted to integrate into the community, a partnership started to develop. The business agreed to host a job shadow for a client and then provide first-hand restaurant work experience through an on-the-job evaluation. Amber was part of a process at every step; providing an individual with a disability a chance to work, helping the individual use his skills, build self-esteem, and contribute to the community. As a business, they were able to identify job tasks that would fit the unique skills of the client. After evaluating the client and their business needs, Amber and Nebraska VR staff discussed the opportunity to create a job specific to the client and the skills he could bring as an employee. This job led to the client celebrating his one-year work anniversary this August and the restaurant adding inclusive hiring practices to their community commitment.

Disability Employment and Inclusion Small Business Recognition Award:

Sehnert's Bakery and The Bieroc Café – McCook, NE

Sehnert's Bakery and The Bieroc Café, a James Beard America's Classic Award winner, has been a McCook favorite for 60 years. Matt and Shelley Sehnert operate the café and bakery with a team of 12 to 14 part-time or full-time employees. The business was first introduced to Nebraska VR 12 years ago when they hired a client who has since been promoted to a manager role. The bakery has more recently hosted on-the-job evaluations for adult clients as well as work-based learning experiences and career exploration for students preparing to transition to the world of work. Matt Sehnert is committed to the McCook community and to supporting his team of employees by recognizing strengths and abilities while giving them the tools to be successful. His belief is that everyone should have a job to give purpose to his or her life.

Disability Employment and Inclusion Large Business Recognition Award:

Middleton Electric, Inc. – Grand Island, NE

Middleton Electric, Inc. is a Nebraska-based commercial electrical service company in operation for over 40 years with offices in Grand Island, Kearney, and Lincoln. As a founding partner in the Nebraska VR Electrical Certificate Program in Grand Island, the business played an integral role along with the Nebraska Career Pathway Advancement Project (CPAP) Grant, Central Community College, and the Nebraska Department of Labor to develop an electrical helper training program for individuals with disabilities. Graduating more than 50 students, Middleton's General Manager and Certificate Program Instructor Matt Treffer has worked to teach students in a way that complements their learning style. The company has a strong commitment to disability employment and inclusion by providing mentoring, job shadows, and worksite tours. Additionally, they have hired or promoted over thirty Nebraska VR clients within the electrical career pathway including three who have obtained journeyman electrician licenses.

Champion for Disability Employment and Inclusion Award:

David Scott – Omaha, NE

David Scott, Director of Sales and Marketing for The Peregrine Hotel Omaha, Curio Collection by Hilton, has a true passion for creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities. He advocated in 2012 for Embassy Suites by Hilton Omaha La Vista Hotel & Conference Center to become one of the first hotels in the nation to host a Project SEARCH site. In 2014, he produced a short documentary film titled "Work Their Best" featuring Project SEARCH students who were hired by the hotel after the workplace immersion training program. The film demonstrated Scott's commitment to disability employment and inclusion to find employees who want to be there. The film won the Omaha Film Festival's 2015 Best Nebraska Short Film Award. More recently, David has been an active Project SEARCH Business Advisory Council member and a Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council member and Council chairperson. David has been selected to be a part of the Omaha-based LeadDIVERSITY Cohort by Inclusive Communities to advocate for individuals with disabilities in a larger conversation about diversity and inclusion. David's 2020 goal is to create an Omaha chapter of Disability:IN, an organization empowering business to achieve disability inclusion and equality.

"It is an honor to be part of this celebration of perseverance, community membership, and equitable access to opportunity. The work and commitment by the business partners and individuals honored today is a model for others who live, earn, and

learn in Nebraska,” said Matthew L. Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education. He also recognized Nebraska VR staff members who provide employment services to clients and businesses.

“This event is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate these individuals and businesses during October’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The awardees exemplify the sentiment of this year’s theme, ‘The Right Talent, Right Now’.” Nebraska VR Director Lindy Foley noted. “Their dedication and contributions 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 Nebraskans who experience a disability are met in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

Nebraska VR is part of the Nebraska Department of Education.

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