



NEWS RELEASE

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2020 DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION AWARDS

Four Nebraska VR partners received awards for their role in creating inclusive workplaces and advocacy for disability employment.

The 2020 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 retain quality employees.

Nebraska Department of Education Commissioner Matthew Blomstedt spoke as part of the virtual awards ceremony. "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 to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living." Dr. Blomstedt also recognized Nebraska VR staff members who provide employment services to clients and businesses.

"We are pleased to recognize these individuals and businesses during October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month. All the awardees exemplify this year's theme 'Increasing Access and Opportunity,'" noted Nebraska VR Director Lindy Foley. "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 award winners are:

Disability Employment and Inclusion Entrepreneur Award:

Sierra Bahm, Lone Wolf Farrier Services – Kearney, Nebraska

Sierra Bahm is motivated, customer-oriented, and wanted to turn her love of horses into one of the most sought-after farrier businesses in central Nebraska. She worked with Nebraska VR employment specialist Marcia Haynes to coordinate a

feasibility study, create a business plan, and train. The self-employment services she received were a critical support to Sierra's strengths, skills, and abilities. Her success is attributed to her hard work and business savvy.

Disability Employment and Inclusion New Business Partnership:

Western Pathology Consultants, Inc. (WPCI) – Scottsbluff, Nebraska

WPCI incorporated in 1994 and have provided drug testing services to companies In Nebraska and across the United States. They have been partnering with Nebraska VR for over a year and have provided several on-the-job evaluations and trainings. The corporate office in Scottsbluff employs twenty-four staff and has hired three clients over the past year.

Disability Employment and Inclusion Small Business Recognition:

Excel Cleaning Solutions – Papillion, Nebraska

Excel Cleaning Solutions offers a wide variety of indoor and outdoor cleaning and maintenance. They have hired four clients and communicate their job openings to find qualified candidates. They have also provided several opportunities for clients to succeed by modifying their interview processes and aligning work schedules to coordinate with public transportation.

Disability Employment and Inclusion Large Business Recognition:

Columbus Community Hospital – Columbus, Nebraska

Columbus Community Hospital, a not-for-profit acute care facility, employs over 670 staff. They have a commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion through hiring practices to build a workplace reflecting their entire community. As a ten-year Project SEARCH business host, Columbus Community Hospital has demonstrated their commitment to providing students with disabilities the work-based learning experiences to be successful employees.

Video of the event is available at: <https://youtu.be/FSiw2sC0wJM>.

Nebraska VR is an office of the Nebraska Department of Education.

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