TIPS to Find the Best Jobs

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Creating an Inclusive Workplace

How to Build Relationships to Win the Contract

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Stevie Wonder: Advocating for an Inclusive World

Creating an Inclusive Workplace

Providing Accessibility Through Digital Innovation
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Millennials make up 30 percent of the population, and according to Fool.com, they will have a collective spending power of more than $1.4 trillion by 2020. The Millennial generation is brand loyal, loves social media, and constitutes 58 percent of mobile shoppers. It seems like this generation is ready to embrace the uncomfortable. I agree with Meg O’Connell in her article, “Let’s Get Uncomfortable About Disability” on page 60. To get comfortable with disabilities, we must face our discomfort. As a disability media resource, DIVERSEability Magazine aims to start conversations about people with disabilities and advocate for accessibility.

DIVERSEability Magazine is a powerful influencer, and we’re proud that it’s becoming America’s fastest-growing magazine for IWDs (Individuals with Disabilities). We are constantly challenged to change our perceptions of individuals. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 54 million Americans have a disability, and the number continues to grow. IWDs have different stories to tell that cross all genders, races, ethnicities and ages. A recent study by the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI) found that “one-third of Millennial professionals have a disability, which is a higher rate than baby boomers or Gen-Xers.”

This means that D&I is more important now than ever in Corporate America. Some corporations like Capital One are already leading the charge for diversity and inclusion. For two years consecutively, Capital One has received a 100 percent score on the Disability Equality Index (DEI) and understands the value of an inclusive workplace. Tom Downs, Sr. Manager for Diversity Talent Acquisition at Capital One, sums it up well: “By having diverse perspectives at the table, we’re able to create better products and services for our customers.” Recently, Cox and Comcast have collaborated to develop more accessible products to all customers. See page 26 for their incredible story.

In addition to media, assistive technology is leading the way. U.S. News & World Report says, “Research shows that the assistive technology market in the U.S. for vision and reading aids will reach $34.4 billion by 2020.” This industry is growing rapidly, and you’ll want to read about how singer Stevie Wonder is advocating for a world of inclusion.

This issue of DIVERSEability Magazine also celebrates NDEAM (National Disability Employment Awareness Month). Read about “Celebrating the Value People with Disabilities Bring to the Workplace” on page 50 and about our “Best of the Best” Disability Friendly Companies making strides in recruiting IWDs on page 13.

We again applaud the companies that understand the value of employing individuals with disabilities and sharing their success stories to educate others.
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www.TeenAFRL.com

www.USAJOBS.gov
Contributing Writers

Sneha Dave
Sneha Dave is a junior at Indiana University. She founded the Crohn's and Colitis Young Adults Network to connect young adults with inflammatory bowel diseases. Sneha also created the Health Advocacy Summit, a first-of-its-kind, no-cost advocacy event for high school and college-aged students with chronic illnesses. She is the chair and founder of the first and only disability caucus in Indiana. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram @snehadave98.

Michele Erwin
Michele Erwin is the President of All Wheels Up. She has been interviewed and quoted in multiple publications/media, including the BBC. In 2017, Michele was a speaker at the Virgin Atlantic inaugural Wheelchair in the Cabin Symposium. She is working with the airline, plane manufacturers, and other industry stakeholders to make space for a wheelchair possible aboard aircraft. Michele is the 2018 National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Region 6 Advocate of the Year.

Connie Russell Gorum
Connie Russell Gorum is the CEO of C. L. Russell Group, LLC—a workforce training and talent consulting company based in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area. Connie is a veteran in the U.S. Navy Reserves. Connie holds an M.S. in Strategic Leadership, B.S. in Science in Business Management, and A.S. in Marketing Management. Connie launched Fashionista Entrepreneur Academy in 2013, designed to teach youth entrepreneur skills aligned with their passion in mind.

Meg O’Connell, PHR
Meg O’Connell is the CEO of Global Disability Inclusion. She works with Global 500 companies, foundations and nonprofits to provide strategic direction, design and implementation of disability employment and inclusion programs. A few of her notable clients include P&G, Toys R Us, Starbucks, NCR, Arrow Electronics, and The Poses Family Foundation, just to name a few.

Jaeson “Doc” Parsons
Doc joined the U.S. Army in June of 2005 after a successful career in the global derivatives markets as a foreign exchange dealer, derivative analyst and institutional broker. He served as the platoon medic for Bravo Company, 3rd platoon in Ar Ramadi, Iraq. Doc earned a Combat Medical Badge for his actions in combat. In 2010, Doc created the Graffiti of War Project to help raise awareness for PTSD and TBI. He is a freelance correspondent for Force 12 Media and SOPREP.com.

Craig Radford
Craig Radford received bachelor’s degrees in English and business information systems from Utah State University. He currently runs Connect Direct at Communication Service for the Deaf. As a published author of books and articles, his goal as a writer is to spotlight communities or topics that are often not fully understood. Having lost his hearing and being Deaf himself, he is able to bring understanding and awareness on Deaf-related experiences (technology, coaching Deaf Olympics, employment), as well as provide resources/solutions to the masses.

Ellis Rosenberg
Ellis Rosenberg is senior vice president of SourceAmerica’s Growth team. The role builds on a career in technology services, mobility and healthcare. He leads 60 employees in sales and marketing dedicated to building connections and breaking down barriers to employment for people with disabilities. His expertise focuses on enterprise strategy and developing national partnerships to expand the organization’s mission of creating employment opportunities and choices for people with disabilities.

Erica Sabino
Erica Sabino is a graduate from the University of Ateneo de Manila where she received a B.S. in management. In college, she was an active member of SPEED, a student-run organization that advocates for people with special needs. Growing up with a younger brother who has autism, she had been motivated to contribute in any way she can to keeping her advocacy alive in every aspect in her life. In 2015, she moved from the Philippines to the United States. She is currently living in Southern California where she works at a marketing firm in Orange County.

Sereen Suleiman
Sereen Suleiman has been a writer for DIVERSeability Magazine since January 2017. A student at the University of California, Irvine, she will earn her B.S. in pharmaceutical sciences in 2018.
We’re always open to more diverse perspectives.

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THE LIST

DISABILITY-FRIENDLY COMPANIES

Making Diversity & Inclusion a Priority
We are pleased to announce DIVERSEability Magazine’s 2018 Top Disability-Friendly Companies, as determined by the Disability Equality Index® (DEI) for Disability Inclusion. The DEI® offers businesses an opportunity to receive a score from zero to 100 on their disability inclusion policies and practices.

The survey is a joint initiative of the American Association of People with Disabilities and the Disability:IN that gives companies the opportunity to reevaluate policies and practices and determine where they stand among other organizations for disability inclusion practices. Eighty-three Fortune 1000-size companies completed the DEI, with 23 business segments represented.

The companies on the Top Disability-Friendly Companies list demonstrate exemplary hiring and employment practices for people with disabilities. This public, annual recognition is designed to applaud those organizations that are leading the way in disability hiring and to encourage additional companies to tap into the many benefits of hiring talent with disabilities, including strong consumer preference for companies that employ individuals with disabilities and greater employee engagement across the workforce.

“The companies on this list represent the very best in diversity and inclusion of people with disabilities,” said Mona Lisa Faris, president and publisher of DIVERSEability Magazine. “We hope that by highlighting the successes of these cutting-edge organizations, we will encourage other companies to follow suit and drive forward the inclusiveness of corporate America.”

The 2018 Best of the Best winners are companies that need no convincing that people with disabilities make outstanding contributions to the workplace. They have seen the untapped potential of this particular talent pool and they are welcoming individuals with disabilities into their ranks.

“The organizations being recognized this year understand that people with disabilities have tremendous talents to offer, and people with disabilities make outstanding contributions to the workplace,” said Faris.

The hope is that the companies highlighted on this list will show other organizations that people with disabilities are as easy to hire and retain as any other employees. And that is what President George H.W. Bush wanted employers to know when he signed the American Disabilities Act (ADA) into law in 1990: that employers hold the key to unlocking the great potential of the ADA.

More than 1,800 companies participated in the 2018 survey. There is no fee to participate, and every company receives a free report card assessing its performance against all competitors. The survey, now in its 3rd year, leads to a detailed, empirically driven ranking. The free report card assesses performance based on four areas of diversity management:

- **Talent pipeline**: workforce breakdown, recruitment, diameter of existing talent, structures
- **Equitable talent development**: employee resource groups, mentoring, philanthropy, movement, fairness
- **CEO/leadership commitment**: accountability for results, personal communications, visibility
- **Supplier diversity**: spend with companies owned by people from underrepresented groups, accountability, support

For people with disabilities, work flexibility can be as much a top priority as for other job seekers looking for the best flexible work options. Companies that met the initial threshold for inclusion on the Best of the Best list were also evaluated using additional factors, including:

- How inviting a company’s website was to customers, job applicants, and others with disabilities
- Whether a company’s recruiting process was inclusive of job seekers with disabilities
- How and whether a company keeps track of employees with disabilities, including new hires
- Availability of flexible benefits like working from home and alternative career options

The disability community, from grassroots advocates to powerful cross-disability organizations, devotes a lot of time and energy to proving the value of hiring disabled workers. Providing equal opportunity is providing equal rights, because it’s moral and ethical.

The companies on this list are leading the way in promoting an inclusive workplace, part of a community of businesses that are proud of the advancements they have made in hiring workers with disabilities.

“We are honored to celebrate the forward-thinking companies on this year’s list,” continues Faris, “and to shine a light on the companies that are leading the way in including people with disabilities.”
## Disability-Friendly Companies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Top Employer</th>
<th>Disability-Friendly Company</th>
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<td>3M</td>
<td>Financial Industry Regulatory Authority</td>
<td>Procter &amp; Gamble</td>
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<td>Accenture</td>
<td>(FINRA)</td>
<td>Prudential Financial</td>
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<td>Aetna</td>
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<td>Amazon.com</td>
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<td>Qualcomm Technologies, Inc.</td>
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<td>AMC Entertainment, Inc.</td>
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<td>Ameren Corporation</td>
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<td>Anthem, Inc.</td>
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<td>Southern California Edison</td>
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<td>Aramark</td>
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<td>AT&amp;T Inc.</td>
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<td>Highmark Health</td>
<td>Spaulding Rehabilitation Network</td>
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<td>BAE Systems, Inc.</td>
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<td>Bank of America</td>
<td>Huntington National Bank</td>
<td>State Street Corporation</td>
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<td>Baylor Scott &amp; White Health</td>
<td>Intel Corporation</td>
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<td>Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan</td>
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<td>Boston Scientific</td>
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**Note:** This list represents a selection of companies that have been recognized for their efforts in promoting disability-friendly practices. The criteria for inclusion can vary, and these companies may or may not be specifically recognized as disability-friendly by all organizations.
WE STAND FOR DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE, EXPERIENCES, AND IDEAS.
The US Business Leadership Network (USBLN), the leading nonprofit resource for business disability inclusion worldwide, has rebranded to Disability:IN to better reflect its important, and strengthened, mission of empowering businesses to achieve disability inclusion and equality. The new brand was launched in Las Vegas at the sold-out annual conference and expo of Disability:IN, which attracted more than 1,500 people representing businesses and organizations committed to advancing the employment of people with disabilities.

Since its inception, Disability:IN has helped 160 partner businesses attract more than 10,000 candidates with disabilities, diversify their supply chains with diversity-owned vendors, and benchmark their progress in achieving disability inclusion.

“We help companies identify and draw from the unique strengths and talents of people with disabilities—to move their businesses forward and foster diversity and inclusion across their enterprises. Employers should be embracing the skills that people with disabilities contribute, as our survey shows that millennials find it imperative, and it fosters innovation.”

—Jill Houghton, president and CEO of Disability:IN

**DIVERSEability Magazine Promotes Mentorship Exchange**

*DIVERSEability Magazine* had the pleasure of attending the Disability:IN Mentorship Exchange. The program, a six-month career mentoring opportunity for college students and recent graduates with disabilities with business professionals from Disability:IN partner companies. Along with supporting students and recent graduates as they navigate what it means to be successful and answers unique questions about being a person with a disability in the workforce, it also gives participants a strong network of business partners to connect with!
Keynote Speaker Ted Kennedy, Jr.

Disability rights lawyer and advocate Senator Edward “Ted” Kennedy, Jr., was the keynote speaker at 2018 Disability:IN 21st Annual Conference & Expo. “Nothing is more important to me than defending the rights of people with disabilities,” he said.

When Kennedy was just twelve years old, his right leg was amputated after a diagnosis of osteosarcoma, a form of bone cancer. “Little did I know that would be the defining moment of my life,” Kennedy told the audience. His Aunt Rosemary was born with an intellectual disability that prompted his Aunt Eunice Shriver to start the Special Olympics 50 years ago. “They experienced exclusion first hand, which is why I think they became such tremendous advocates for people with disabilities and others who have been left out of our communities through no fault of their own.”

“When you give somebody a job, you give them their freedom. You give them self-esteem,” Kennedy explained. Chair of the Board for The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Kennedy is also a board member of Special Olympics International and Connecticut’s Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities. He served on President Ronald Reagan’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and he lectures nationally on disability, cancer, and healthcare policy.

Sources: usnews.com; wikipedia.org; usbln.org; aapd.com

1 in 5 Americans will experience a disability during their lifetime

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
A Word with Singer Mandy Harvey

Mandy Harvey is a musician—she has been since she was four years old. On last season’s America’s Got Talent, Simon Cowell gave her the coveted Golden Buzzer, and audiences voted her through to the finals based on her pitch-perfect, delicate voice and original, moving lyrics. Many were surprised to learn that Harvey is deaf. She gradually lost her hearing as a result of a connective tissue disorder, and by the time she was just starting college at 19, she was legally deaf. She performs using muscle memory and a visual tuner.

Harvey told DIVERSEability Magazine, “My goals are to help encourage inclusion and to highlight that while you may have suffered something traumatic or you’re different in some capacity, you are capable of doing incredible things.” She says she fails at something every day, but “it’s an opportunity to grow, to learn—to become even stronger.”

While she was terrified at the thought of performing on America’s Got Talent, her audition video has garnered more than 500 million views on YouTube in multiple languages. She’s been told that it's started millions of conversations and encouraged communities to reconsider how they look at inclusion, particularly in the Deaf community.

Pleased by the positive feedback she has received, Harvey says, when asked what she wants to do with her life, “I want to encourage and motivate people, to show them that it is okay to fail, that you can get up, that you can conquer and keep going forward. I wanted to show a different side of what an invisible disability looks like.”
68% of millennials (age 18 to 34) believe it’s very to extremely important to work for a company that fosters a diverse and inclusive workplace, compared to 61% of Gen Xers (age 35 to 54), and 45% of baby boomers (age 55+).

Source: Disability:IN

Advocate of the Year: Supply Chain Inclusion Award Winner

Raul Suarez-Rodriguez, Manager, Supplier Diversity & Strategic Procurement for CVS, was honored at the Disability:IN 2018 Annual Conference with its Supplier Diversity Advocate of the Year Award.

“I am proud and honored to receive such great recognition,” Raul said, as he also thanked Cindy Ulven and Paul Gittenmeir for nominating him and “believing in the work I do with such great passion. CVS works with disability suppliers and leverages their work and products for our operations.”

Source: disabilityin.org

Voya Financial Wins Employer of the Year: Champion

“It means a great deal to Voya that a leading organization like Disability:IN recognized us with the Employer of the Year: Champion award, reflecting our work to advance disability inclusion,” said Voya’s Chairman and CEO Rodney O. Martin, Jr. “We know that financial wellness can be particularly difficult for people with disabilities and their caregivers—so, given our expertise in preparing Americans for a secure financial future, we set out as an organization to determine how we could best support people with disabilities and special needs. We began with a grass-roots approach, gathering input from our employees.”

Source: linkedin.com

Employer of the Year: Inspire Award

Northrop Grumman was given the Employer of the Year: Inspire Award, recognizing the company for its exemplary policies, strategies and initiatives that have resulted in measurable results in the areas of disability inclusiveness in the workplace, marketplace and supply chain. At the Leadership Awards Dinner, Sandra Evers-Manley, Vice President, Global Corporate Responsibility, accepted the award on behalf of the company, saying, “Today, I am very pleased to say that on this spot Northrop Grumman hired 15 individuals to join our company.”
Currently, the aggregate income of people with disabilities is more than $1 trillion
Bill Evans has worked in recruiting for 20 years, many of those for a staffing firm. He was laid off in 2008 because of the “housing bubble,” so he worked as a contractor for other businesses until he decided to become incorporated himself. Bill lives with Parkinson’s disease, and his company, Current Staffing, is disability-owned business enterprise (DOBE) certified. “It is the policy of Current Staffing Solutions to use other certified businesses for its good and services—for example, we hired City Mouse, a DOBE, to redesign our website. Our staff is made up of 75 percent individuals with disabilities and 75 percent other diverse groups.”

How did you learn about DOBE certification?
I cold-called companies, looking to do staffing. I reached L. Jay Burks, PhD, Comcast Director of Supplier Diversity, on the phone. I said, “I’m going to change your life,” and told him I’d give him a chance to prove that people with disabilities can succeed when given a chance. So he encouraged, mentored, and guided you? He introduced me to Kami at Disability:IN and helped me through the process. It was a long process but worthwhile. The organization is very thorough about making sure you are a person with a disability.

What are your goals?
To provide cutting-edge diversity and disability inclusion services for companies in the Fortune 1000. To do that, we are currently partnering with as many DOBEs as we can, to provide people with disabilities especially, because they’re the most difficult to find.

One of the things Comcast is championing right now: taking the emotion out of the accommodation process—this is huge, because emotion is where we all get into trouble. It can lead us in a good direction, but it can also lead us in a bad direction. We don’t want it to be a factor in the process, period. People with disabilities want to deal with facts, not emotion.

This year, we’ve added, on average, one Fortune 500 company a month to our client list. All of those companies are willing and open to hire people with disabilities.

Is that what makes you different?
Yes, that’s one thing that makes us different. Other things are that we’re able to attract better talent because we are diversity and disability inclusive. We are really trying to make a difference, one person at a time. We have employees that believe in our mission, and that’s why we’re here. “Can’t” is not in our vocabulary.
How Companies are Becoming a “Best Place to Work for Disability Inclusion”

How do companies enable a culture of disability inclusion that promotes self-identification, authenticity and innovation? By leveraging the Disability Equality Index (DEI).

Fortune 500-1000 and Am Law 200 companies take the DEI for annual benchmarking of their disability inclusion efforts. Their final report outlines achievements and areas for improvement. The DEI is the nation’s most trusted disability benchmarking tool, with Forbes, Bloomberg Law, USA Today, and other outlets reporting on its value. The DEI is a non-punitive tool, with scores below 80 kept strictly confidential. The DEI is a joint initiative between Disability:IN and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD).

On the 28th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Disability:IN releases the best practices of top-rated companies, which are recognized as “Best Places to Work for Disability Inclusion.” We’ve outlined five of those best practices below.

Registration is now open for the 2019 DEI. Learn more and register at disabilityequalityindex.org.

1. Start with a Hire

One in five Americans has a disability and, globally, 1 billion people have a disability (15% of the world’s population), according to the U.S. Census and World Bank Group. If you aren’t inclusive, you are missing an untapped workforce, market segment, and innovative suppliers.

One top-rated company hired a Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHOH) individual for a program manager role. Under this program manager’s leadership, the company website was updated to highlight accessible resources, an informational poster campaign was developed, and a cross-functional leadership team was formed.

According to the Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT), a demand for accessibility skills will only increase. The Disability:IN Talent Accelerator and Mentorship Exchange programs give access to talent with disabilities.

2. Provide Resources

Top-rated DEI companies frequently report they provide a variety of disability inclusion to all of their employees. One company targeted their senior leaders with specific leadership training to help foster a culture of inclusion. Another company provides protocols on how to run accessible and inclusive meetings and events.

Companies participating in the Disability:IN Inclusion Works program receive personalized resources through their partnership. From animated training videos, to resources to develop employee resource groups, the subject matter experts leverage the DEI as a roadmap, and outline actions to help companies advance in their disability inclusion journey.

3. Enable Internal Support Systems

Disability inclusion across the enterprise may be a challenge. An inclusive workforce doesn’t always translate into an inclusive supply chain or marketplace. One top-rated company wanted to diversify their supply chains and held a summit for service-disabled veteran disability-owned business enterprises (SDV-DOBES™). Their own employees facilitated the summit, which activated a forum between SDV-DOBES and corporate purchase decision makers. The company also formally increased their commitment to spending with SDV-DOBES.

The Disability:IN Supplier Diversity program provides a great first look into how to build inclusive supply chains. Through supplier mentorship and access to the certified supplier HUB, corporate partners are connecting with innovative suppliers.

4. Make it a Corporate Priority

At Disability:IN, we know what gets measured, gets done. By using the DEI, top-rated companies are able to concretely track their progress towards disability inclusion. As a company gains momentum, it becomes an even stronger priority. From improved contract language to influencing prime contractors, to gaining an executive sponsor of a disability employee resource group, corporate prioritization demonstrates an advanced level of inclusion.

5. Utilize Partnerships

Top-rated companies report leveraging their partnerships, including national and local, in various ways across the enterprise. Disability:IN has a network of 160+ partners, along with 50+ affiliates in local geographies.

Disability:IN has strong connections to the various disability communities. The DEI was created in partnership with the AAPD through the guidance of a DEI Advisory Committee. This committee is comprised of 50 percent business, 30 percent disability advocacy, 15 percent consulting and 5 percent legal entities. This ensures comprehensive questions and methodologies for the DEI, to represent the various needs, challenges, and opportunities of all stakeholders.
Rating corporations on disability inclusive efforts across the enterprise.

Registration now open at disabilityequalityindex.org
Guided by a Light From Above
Marathoner and mother Gail Richey applauds UTC for listening and supporting employees with different abilities

Gail Richey remembers the transformative moment well. The finance specialist at Pratt & Whitney, a division of United Technologies, was running in her first endurance relay race. The last leg she was scheduled for would start at 2 a.m., so someone fitted her head with a lamp to light the way.

“I told them, ‘I’ve never run in the dark with a head lamp before,’ and they replied, ‘You’ll be fine.’ Turns out, that was my best run ever.”

Over time, Gail has become accustomed to relying on a light from above to guide her through the darkness—in life as well as on the running trail. She has profound hearing loss and is recovering from breast cancer. Still, she says those challenges have been balanced by an employer that respects the abilities she brings to her job while accommodating the disabilities she now lives with.

“I work for a great company,” Gail says. “As for diversity and inclusion, UTC is open to everything. And they supported me through my cancer, which says a lot, because I was working in a high-performing job that had month-end responsibilities.”

Gail launched her career at UTC more than 30 years ago as an administrative assistant in the accounting department of the company’s Otis business unit. She later became supervisor of accounts payable within Otis. Then, an opportunity to get a bachelor’s degree materialized.

“UTC’s Employee Scholar Program paid for the costs associated with getting my degree,” she says, “and I chose to do that. It was hard. I was taking care of my three daughters, Leila, Lorelei and Kelsey—and I was taking three courses every semester. But after I earned that degree, I moved into an accounting position and, soon after, I was offered a job within UTC’s Pratt & Whitney.”

Her career was advancing, but her hearing was in retreat. At age 35, Gail noticed her ears were ringing and felt blocked. It took a physician looking deep into her family history to discern that she was experiencing sudden hearing loss. “My father was almost deaf, and two of his brothers were completely deaf,” she recalls, “but we never thought it’d flow down to us kids.”

Her hearing continued to deteriorate but is now stabilized. What’s advanced is her awareness of how we can all be more sensitive to those with impaired hearing. She encourages people to always look at the hearing-impaired person they are speaking to and to avoid a sudden change of topic.

Gail says UTC supported her as she grappled with the possibility she may lose her hearing completely. The company stepped up once again three years ago, she says, when a mammogram revealed she had an aggressive form of breast cancer. Since 2015, she’s undergone multiple treatments and surgeries.

“I’ve learned there are much worse things than losing my hearing,” she says. “I can’t die from hearing loss.”

Key to her holding down a full-time job and managing her increased disability, she says, has been her participation in UTC’s Empower Ability Employee Resource Group. The group has not simply introduced her to other employees with hearing loss, she emphasizes. “We now have members who face challenges in the workplace such as autism and depression, and they are very open about it. The group has also made all of us more aware of resources available, such as closed captioning on laptops when in all-hands meetings and additional phone support.”

“UTC continues to learn how to work with employees with disabilities,” she adds. “The company realizes a person with limitations very likely comes with some added benefits, as well.”

“My being deaf and a cancer survivor aren’t all of who I am, they’re parts of me,” Gail explains. “I’m glad that UTC is open to a discussion about these issues and encourages employees like me to participate in those discussions.”
United Technologies’ diverse workforce drives innovation and keeps us ahead of the competition. Our Empower Ability Employee Resource Group provides resources and support so employees with diverse abilities can achieve their highest potential, personally and professionally. We are proud to have Gail Richey as part of our team—hearing impaired, cancer survivor, marathoner, 30-year UTC employee.

UNITED IN DIVERSITY

www.utc.com
Cox and Comcast Focusing on Accessibility

Telecommunications leaders collaborate on talking guide and other accessibility features

By Jaeson “Doc” Parsons

The Cox Communications new Contour voice remote, powered by Comcast’s X1 platform, empowers customers who have limited mobility or dexterity or a visual disability. With the push of a button, you can search, surf and record your favorite programs, all with the sound of your voice. Plus, the new Contour features Voice Guidance, a “talking guide” developed by Comcast, that speaks what’s on the screen, including program descriptions and navigation options. Now individuals with accessibility needs can easily explore thousands of TV shows and movies.

This proactive step is not limited to their product offering. Cox is also hiring individuals with disabilities to test their products.

Mona Lisa Faris, president and publisher of DIVERSEability Magazine, spoke with representatives from Cox and Comcast to discuss how their collaboration is helping both companies become more proactive.

Ilene Albert, Executive Director, Value Added Services and Diversity Products at Cox, began with some history behind this new focus at Cox.

“Last December, we launched a center of excellence for accessibility, to focus on developing products, support and services for our customers who have disabilities and accessibility needs. We are very excited about this; we work with all of our peers across the product organization to make sure we are looking at the broad picture of accessibility,” Albert explained. “We partner well with Comcast, who has been the leader in helping develop products for the accessibility community.

Jennifer Cobb is Director of Diversity Products at Cox. She told us, “Last year, we worked to set up the business processes so that, going forward, we were included in all new product development. One of the things we are working toward is integrating more research with persons with disabilities into our overall processes.”

Thomas Wlodkowski is the Vice President of Accessibility at Comcast. He was brought in to start up an accessibility office and, because he is visually impaired, he provides a unique perspective for Comcast, helping the company open products and services to the widest possible audience.

“I’ve been in the accessibility field before it was really considered a field—since the early 1990s,” Wlodkowski reports. At Comcast, our program is founded on three pillars: customer experience, product capabilities and infrastructure. My team is in the product group, and we launched voice guidance, which enables people who are visually impaired to navigate onscreen menus. We have an accessibility lab in our Philadelphia corporate headquarters that we use to drive employee awareness, and we also bring external community members in to help with user testing. It’s a big piece of our effort.”

Wlodkowski went on to say, “There is a saying in the disability civil rights community: Nothing about us without us. We really need to bring people with disabilities into the development process to find out where the barriers are.”

“At Comcast, we are building a lot of the accessibility solutions that, essentially, Cox would have had to build on their own. They get accessibility as part of the relationship. Then the two accessibility teams can partner to share best practices.”

“X1 has been a great product for us,” Wlodkowski said. “It’s based in the cloud, so we don’t have to install additional software or hardware in the box. We can roll new features in—and as we do that, Cox can also pick them up as well.”

New features were recently added just as Tom said, as Cox released a statement earlier this month announcing that YouTube is now available for Cox customers via their Contour app.

As Tom Wlodkowski pointed out, “By building accessible products, it builds a better product overall for everyone.” Accessibility is a fairly new frontier, as more and more companies realize that dedicating teams to ensure accessibility not only improves the products offered to those with disabilities but it also provides a better experience for all customers.

Cox’s licensed version of Comcast’s X1 platform, Contour, is now its flagship video product. And fans of The Voice who have Comcast or Cox as their cable provider will be happy to know they can now use their remote to cast their votes on the popular live show. The Contour/X1 technology is truly changing the television viewing experience, offering something for everybody to love!
“We really need to bring people with disabilities into the development process to find out where the barriers are.”

—Tom Wlodkowski, Comcast
You’ve seen the stories before. A company goes the extra mile to reduce its environmental impact. A viral video spreads, depicting a frontline employee performing one of those heartwarming go-the-extra-mile services for a client with a specific need. A CEO posts an open letter on social media about how his company is finished with cutting corners and will now do whatever it takes to serve customers in a way that better benefits the greater good. These kinds of things happen all the time. And there’s a common thread that holds them all together: whenever an employee, leader, or company does this, its profits, its stock value, and its performance spontaneously start to climb. 

At first glance, it might be easy to assume that these gains are short term. The company sees a quick spike in profits thanks to this spark of goodwill, but then, a day or two later, the news cycle shifts and everything returns to equilibrium. But this just isn’t so. More and more companies are starting to wake up to the realization that doing the right thing is profitable now while also generating considerable value in the long term. 

Recent polls released by JUST Capital, a nonprofit research organization with a mission to publish reports on the “just behavior” of American companies, suggest that firms demonstrating a commitment to doing the right thing outperform their competitors across the board. The JUST 100 is their list of the most ethically responsible companies in the nation, and their survey data shows that these hundred companies enjoy profits 1 to 4 percent higher than the competition in their respective industries. There’s good reason for this boost in performance. According to a survey by Cone Communications, more than nine out of ten people under the age of 35 (or in other words, the demographic with that sweet-spot combination of spending power and an actual desire to spend) are willing to switch brands to one associated with a positive cause. 

But that’s only a small part of the picture. The world’s highest market-capped companies are recognizing that doing the right thing now always translates to added value in the near, middle, and distant future, regardless of demographic trends. Companies like Alphabet, Amazon, and Coca-Cola are doing their part to lower their environmental impact, not just because of global warming or dwindling resources but also because the annualized performance of greener companies far outstrips that of the competition. Accenture, Nike, and Nestlé are performing expansive charitable works, both because they see a need they can help meet and because serving communities enhances a company’s value. In every industry, the most ethical and enlightened organizations outperform their shareholder-focused counterparts by considerable margins, and in every industry, those companies are significantly more valuable now while also enjoying steeper growth trajectories and performance projections. 

This, of course, is laudable. When many of the world’s largest companies are starting to show commitment to more diverse hiring practices, promoting women into positions of power, paying their workers a living wage, offering flexible working hours and more paid leave, reducing their carbon footprint and waste output, and donating substantial time and money to charity, it brings hope for a brighter future. There is, however, a large group of people who remain thoroughly underserved, even in this more enlightened corporate world. There are 40 million Deaf and Hard of Hearing people worldwide, and yet the large majority of them still contend with companies that fail to meet their communication needs. 

I recently produced a commercial for Connect Direct, a company whose mission is to eliminate a huge barrier still standing between companies and the millions of Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers they are attempting to serve. The commercial depicts a young couple...
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Through the inspired work of our diverse employees, we deliver innovative, scalable solutions for our customers. We do this with sustainability in mind, while caring for our employees and serving the communities where we live and work.
trying to pay their tab at a restaurant, but the young man’s card is declined. He calls his bank to figure out what is going on, but the operator informs him that his bank doesn’t offer customer service in English, the young man’s native language. His frustration mounts as he waits for an interpreter to join the line. Then, it boils over when the reception on the interpreter’s line is poor, and the call drops, cutting off both the interpreter and the customer service representative. The young man is so confused, embarrassed, and dejected that he winds up sheepishly promising his date that he will pick up the next bill.

As the commercial points out, imagine if this kind of thing happened to you every day. Imagine having to go through a third-party when you’re just trying to get a fast resolution to a frustrating problem that requires customer service. Rather than speaking directly to a representative who can help right away, you have to jump through a series of complicated and time-consuming hoops just to receive the basic level of customer care that most of your Hearing counterparts take for granted. This is the unfortunate reality for millions of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans.

Even today, as companies like Connect Direct work to eliminate this barrier by offering employers the tools to outsource or employ Deaf and Hard of Hearing customer service representatives that can speak to these underserved customers directly and in their native language, these millions-strong communities remain underserved. So, while the rest of the JUST 100 and other ethically conscious companies focus on serving causes of diversity, ethical employment practices, environmental responsibility, and charitable giving, there remains a huge, mostly untapped opportunity to enjoy those same gains by doing the right thing for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. Partnering with Connect Direct isn’t merely a matter of doing what is right. It isn’t even simply a means of better connecting with the tens of millions of Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers worldwide. It is also a positive, high-profile, publicity-generating means to improve a company’s profits today and its value in the long term.
For over 33 years, the Center on Disabilities, through the Annual CSUN Assistive Technology Conference, has provided an inclusive setting for researchers, practitioners, exhibitors, consumers, speakers and other participants to share knowledge and best practices in the field of assistive technology.

Recognized as the premiere conference that showcases cutting edge technology and practical solutions utilized to promote the full participation of persons with disabilities in educational, workplace and social settings, the CSUN Conference is an event you won’t want to miss!

Please join us at the 2019 CSUN Assistive Technology Conference as we celebrate our 34th Annual event in our new location – the Anaheim Marriott in Anaheim, California.

Save the Date & Place

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March 11 - March 15, 2019

Keynote Speaker & Welcome Reception
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Parker interns gain valuable experience through hands-on training at various company locations. Those who are seniors are given consideration for full-time employment with Parker upon graduation, a valuable opportunity to begin a career with momentum.

**DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

Ranging from six to 24 months, Parker’s development programs help graduates to establish an understanding of our operations and products and provide valuable experience through rotational assignments at various Parker locations.

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This program provides recent engineering graduates the knowledge and skills necessary to be a leader at Parker. They will spend time in two to three different Parker locations during this 12-month program.
HUMAN RESOURCES TRAINEE PROGRAM
This program provides practical training in HR by offering trainees a rotational program to accelerate their development within Parker’s corporate and manufacturing environments. It features four three-month rotations at various Parker divisions.

INTERNAL AUDIT TRAINEE PROGRAM
This program exposes trainees to all of Parker’s operations including corporate functions, division operations, sales companies and financial service units to accelerate their development. Trainees have one six-month rotation at one of Parker’s U.S. manufacturing locations and then will spend 18 months at Corporate Headquarters.

LEAN AND QUALITY TRAINEE PROGRAM
This program prepares talented engineering or operations management graduates to be future functional and business leaders. The program provides hands on experience with lean tools and six sigma methodologies. It lasts two years and consists of four six-month rotational assignments at different locations.

STRATEGIC PRICING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
This program offers MBA and post graduate equivalents the opportunity to experience all areas of operations while analyzing and quoting new business. The 12-month rotational program features three to four 12-week rotations at various Parker divisions.

TECHNICAL SALES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
College graduates are trained to become technical and commercial problem solvers for Parker’s widely diverse customer base, with training in technologies, business basics, selling and negotiating, products and applications.

Learn more at www.parker.com/careers
Model Joins “Little × Little”: Movement to Fix the Future

Dominican-American Jillian Mercado first made headlines when she responded to an open casting call for a Diesel Jeans ad campaign and landed the job. Since then, she has appeared in advertisements for Nordstrom and has been featured on Beyoncé’s website ShopBeyoncé.com. Now the model, who was diagnosed with spastic muscular dystrophy as a teen, is joining “Little × Little,” a global movement led by Generation Z to fix the future. Little × Little made a bold plan to inspire 2 billion acts of good by 2030 in support of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Mercado and several other influencers will share their stories, content and actions on YouTube and other social platforms.

Sources: littlexlittle.com, wsj.com, themighty.com, chicagotribune.com
RJ Mitte Talks Adaptive Clothing

Actor RJ Mitte has cerebral palsy. Growing up, he wore leg braces and used crutches, limiting the type of clothing he could wear. Today, Mitte aims to spread the word about new advances in adaptive clothing. Recently, the Breaking Bad star teamed up with Runway of Dreams—a nonprofit organization that develops adaptive-clothing designs—to host its annual fashion gala, which took place in September. “Back then if you wanted clothes to fit, you altered it yourself,” Mitte told People at the gala. “Luckily, I had family who would alter my pants if need be and my khakis or whatever I was wearing in school.” He went on to say, “I had a size 7 shoe, but because of my braces I had to get size 12.”

Sources: people.com
NFL’s Newest Addition Making History

Shaquem Griffin made history earlier this spring when he became the first one-handed player picked in the modern era NFL draft, joining his twin brother Shaquill on the Seattle Seahawks defense. Griffin had his left hand amputated when he was 4 because of amniotic band syndrome, a rare prenatal condition that left his hand undeveloped. The syndrome is estimated to occur in anywhere from 1 in 1,200 to 15,000 births, according to the National Organization for Rare Disorders. Griffin says, “There’s going to be a lot more doubters saying what I can’t do, and I’m ready to prove them wrong.”

Sources: rarediseases.org, usatoday.com, tampabay.com
Soul Surfer Bethany Hamilton

When surfer Bethany Hamilton was 13 years old, she lost her left arm to a 14-foot tiger shark. That event would have ended most hopes of a career as a competitive surfer, but not for Bethany Hamilton. Through determination, faith, and hope, Hamilton became an inspiration to millions when she returned to the water just one month after her attack, and within one year, she won her first national title. Her story has been told in a New York Times bestselling autobiography and in the film Soul Surfer, which made $47.1 million at the box office. This professional surfer and motivational speaker is passionate about helping young women to be “unstoppable in life and faith.”

Sources: bethanyhamilton.com, floridamuseum.ufl.edu
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*Benefits listed are for full-time positions only. For a complete list of benefits, visit usps.com/careers.

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**Tom Downs of Capital One on Accessibility**

Capital One achieved a score of 100 percent on the 2018 Disability Equality Index (DEI), the highest ranking possible. The DEI is an initiative between the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and Disability:IN (formerly the US Business Leadership Network), jointly designed by disability advocates and business leaders and it is a trusted, comprehensive benchmarking tool for disability inclusion. The Index measures key performance indicators across organizational culture, leadership, accessibility, employment, community engagement, support services and supplier diversity.

*DIVERSEability Magazine* spoke to Tom Downs, Capital One’s Diversity and Military Talent Acquisition Manager and retired U.S. Army veteran on what makes Capital One an inclusive employer.

*It’s obvious that your organization is continually making great strides in disability recruitment and retention. What sets you apart from the others?*

We’re proud of our efforts at Capital One to recruit candidates from all backgrounds and support them as associates—but we’re constantly looking for ways to improve. We know that every company, including Capital One, can be doing more in this space and that’s why we’re happy to share our success while also looking to learn from others. Foundationally, our recruiters and volunteers who attend disability and college campus job fairs are required to complete additional training, which is facilitated by our diversity recruiting leadership. We have a dedicated email box for candidates to communicate any questions about our recruiting process, including interviewing and application standing. The recruiting process can be confusing or overwhelming for some candidates, so our recruiters coach prospective candidates through the application process and carefully review open roles with special attention to basic and preferred qualifications to ensure the right fit. If a candidate goes through the interview process but ends up not being selected for that specific role, our recruiters engage their peer network to identify other potential roles that the candidate might be better suited for and encourages them to apply or reconnect in the future. We have also incorporated an interaction model for our recruiters and our diversity recruiting leadership where the recruiters receive ongoing or on-demand training and are expected to attend multiple diversity recruiting events throughout the year.

*What specific practices do you implement to achieve this score?*

Our score of 100% on the DEI survey has been a source of pride for our diversity and inclusion teams each year. It’s also a reminder to
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constant evaluate how we can do more with our disability recruiting process and internal procedures to support associates of all abilities, but we also respect and understand that we still have the opportunity for improvement. The score is the result of efforts of many internal partners within Capital One to ensure that we remain compliant and forward-thinking. The cumulative work from our internal partners including human resources, recruiting, accommodations, benefits, digital accessibility, tech, etc. makes all of Capital One’s public-facing digital properties accessible. Our dedicated Digital Accessibility Team (DAT) ensures all of Capital One’s public-facing digital properties are Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0AA. Additionally, our recruiters communicate with candidates about our accommodations processes and connects them with our dedicated accommodations team, whose contact information is also found on our Capital One Careers site (capitalonecareers.com). The accommodations team supports candidates that request an accommodation to complete the application and/or interview process; they also facilitate all aspects of employee accommodations requests and fulfillment once they are hired.

How do your recruiters talk to candidates about self-ID and/or your accommodations process?

Capital One’s recruiters counsel candidates about our accommodations process and provides connect them with our dedicated accommodations team. As a part of that communication, candidates are encouraged to self-ID during the initial application process and then again during the post-offer process when they are completing their formal application and prior to onboarding at the company. Capital One’s Business Resource Groups also discuss with their members and allies not only the importance of self-IDing but also how to do so in our internal system. Thus, allowing our employees to self-ID at any time throughout the year. Capital One has also launched an enterprise-wide annual self-ID campaign, through which employees are encouraged to update their personal profiles in our HR system.

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“Why is promoting the brand as a disability friendly company important to Capital One?”

Andrew Greenbaum was a high school senior when a snowboarding accident presented a major change in his life, leaving him paralyzed and requiring him to use a wheelchair. After a year of recovery, he attended college and began his career in the pharmaceutical industry. In 2016 Andrew relocated from New Jersey to join Amgen and is now a manager in Strategic Pricing & Contracting.

“With any disability there is a natural focus on treatment and recovery, as well as integration into society and the workforce. A lot of progress in American society has been made to help people with disabilities integrate through accessibility legislation and initiatives. At times, what I and others in the disabled community find more difficult is social understanding and integration,” says Andrew. “At Amgen, my colleagues are extraordinarily caring and receptive to one another’s differences and have been accommodating and supportive of my journey.”

Andrew has encountered a range of diversity among his colleagues at Amgen – from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds to different work and communication styles. “I’ve experienced other organizational cultures where folks are less likely to highlight their differences, but here I find people are comfortable talking about their backgrounds,” says Andrew. “It’s definitely made it easier for me to be open about how aspects of my life are different because of my disability. It’s genuinely refreshing and encourages a culture of more authentic personal connection.”

When Andrew applied at Amgen he included a video of him playing wheelchair basketball. It was choice he made to acknowledge his diverse ability, and he believes it helped him stand out in the applicant pool. “Legally you don’t have to mention a disability, but when you own it, sometimes it presents new opportunities,” he says. “Diversity doesn’t have to focus solely on challenges, it’s also about celebrating uniqueness.”
Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation researches, develops, manufactures and markets innovative medicines aimed at improving patients’ lives. We offer a broad range of medicines for cancer, cardiovascular disease, endocrine disease, inflammatory disease, infectious disease, neurological disease, organ transplantation, psychiatric disease, respiratory disease and skin conditions. Our mission is to discover new ways to improve and extend people’s lives.

We are committed to embracing and leveraging diverse backgrounds, cultures and talents to create an inclusive, high-performing culture, to address the evolving needs of patients and customers, to support diverse suppliers, and to enrich the communities we serve.

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Fort Worth, TX 76134
Attn: Supplier Diversity
supplier.diversity@alcon.com

Sandoz
100 College Road West
Princeton, NJ 08540-6604
Attn: Supplier Diversity

Tips to Find the Best Jobs

Job hunting is tough—it can be especially daunting if you have limited mobility. Finding a job when you have a disability can be less challenging if you know where to start, though.

Jantz is a rehabilitation counselor for people with disabilities with the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration under the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

Jantz’s deafness hasn’t stopped him from pursuing a career in a field he says he’s deeply passionate about.

“People typically say it’s their disability (that prohibits their employability), but I disagree with that,” Jantz said. “Both professional experience plus my own personal experiences tells me that the biggest barrier is other people’s attitudes related to disabilities.”

Jantz was told he wouldn’t graduate high school, and he was labeled intellectually disabled. Today, he has two bachelor’s degrees from Portland State University, a master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling from Western Oregon University, and is nationally certified through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.

To reject the notion that having a disability means having limited career options, Jantz says when he rejects his clients’ notions of being undesirable employees, for many of them, it’s the first time an outside source has ever told them they’re capable. It’s the first time somebody else looks beyond their disability and sees them as whole human beings. As a deaf man, Jantz emphasizes how important it is to understand your disability and how it has affected your life.

Before you go job hunting, take some time for internal reflection:

- What are your needs in a job?
- How does your disability empower you?
- How do other people with disabilities in this industry tackle the job’s challenges?

Once you know your innate worth, it’s easier to tackle job hunting challenges with confidence and gusto. The quality of your daily conversations, résumé, job interviews, and more should be honed in with your needs in mind.

Step 2: Identify the Right Industry and Field

Your interests are what will drive your work ethic and ability to persevere and improve. It’s not enough to look for a job with accessibility—the job has to be right for you. Work in a field that aligns with your interests.
We seek creative engineers, scientists and software specialists to develop innovative products and forward-thinking solutions for defense and commercial applications.

ENSCO, Inc. and its wholly owned subsidiaries deliver innovative engineering, science and advanced technology solutions for the national security, rail, avionics, and aerospace industries.

www.ensco.com

An EO/AA employer committed to Diversity in the Workplace. All qualified applicants including minorities, women, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are encouraged to apply.

ENSCO, Inc. and its wholly owned U.S. subsidiaries are Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employers and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or veteran status.
Step 3: Identify Skills and Capabilities

Think critically about the skills you bring to the table. Are you good with computers? Are you a phenomenal writer? Don’t underestimate yourself. Think about how your capabilities can augment your skills. Are you a quick learner or fast problem-solver? You’d be surprised how these assets can tie into your skills and land you a job.

Step 4: Learn How to Market Yourself

Next, it’s time to prep for the interview. This step in the process is about how you can make yourself look better than the competition. How do your skills and capabilities apply to the job you have? If possible, bring anecdotes to the interview to answer any potential questions they may have.

Step 5: Research and Network

Compile a list of the companies with jobs you’re interested in. Do your homework before you apply, and try to determine the following:
- Who does the hiring? Is there a way to connect with them on social channels like LinkedIn?
- Do your interests align with theirs?
- How did others in similar positions earn the job?

Our goal for diversity and inclusion is full inclusion of all.

Our Mission: We, Trinity Health serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.
BECOME A TEAMMATE

Our teammates: the people who make the company go. They make it succeed, grow and flourish. They’re able to because they are empowered to move their careers onward through upward mobility and internal growth.

From our store managers to our technicians, our part-timers to retail sales managers, we take care of our over 22,000+ employees with hearty benefits and room to grow.

WE PROMISE TO CARE

We understand that we offer more than just car service. We rescue people from bad days and we offer solutions for difficult situations. We are people of integrity and we believe that fundamental honesty is the keystone of our business. We are committed to doing the hard work necessary to earn the loyalty of our teammates and our customers by providing a positive experience every time. We are proud and passionate to represent the brand of Bridgestone. Every day, in every store, with every teammate and every customer... we promise to care.

OUR VISION

To be ranked among the most admired customer service companies by the end of the decade.

Bridgestone is an equal opportunity employer

OUR PURPOSE

To be the most trusted provider of automotive care in every neighborhood we serve.

• Store Manager
• Store Manager Trainee
• Tire Sales Manager
• Service Manager
• Retail Sales/Customer Service Associate
• Automotive Lead Technician
• Automotive Senior Technician
• Automotive Technician
• Automotive General Service Technician
• Summer Intern

Call Center Employee. For the charismatic go-getters, try call centers for customer service or sales. If you are comfortable with a computer, this is a great option, as companies are always on the hunt for call center employees. Some employees even have the opportunity to work from home, making this a great option for people with limited mobility.

Legal Secretaries, Legal Assistants, or Paralegals. If you have administrative experience and the right training, working in the legal field is a viable job option for people in wheelchairs. People in these positions generally work in an office and perform tasks that are contained to a desk or computer. Plus, should you need to appear in court, most courthouses have the appropriate accommodations for wheelchair access.

Although it can be arduous to find the right job for your needs, all of the work will pay off. Follow these steps and find a job that you’ll be excited to go to every day.

Source: vantagemobility.com
4 Steps to Impress the Recruiter

By Connie Russell Gorum, CEO C. L. Russell Group, LLC

For people with disabilities, employment means greater economic self-sufficiency, an opportunity to use their skills, and more active participation in their community. People with disabilities know there are many creative ways they can be proactive in ensuring you’re giving it all you’ve got when seeking employment. Even if your condition has no bearing on your ability to do the job, some employers will still have some concerns. It’s up to you to demonstrate to prospective employers that, despite your disability, you’re the best person for the position. Here are a few tips to help you get a seat at the interview table and possibly hired.

1. Use Referrals
   Referrals improve the quality of candidates as well as hires. Many people only refer friends and/or associates they think are qualified for the role. Since their recommendation reflects on their judgment for referring you, they want to make sure you’re the right fit for the role. Demonstrate to your referral you’re capable of performing in the role by sharing experiences and samples of your work. Referring a friend can be risky and could damage their credibility. So be committed and value your referral, and they will value what you’re bringing to the table.

2. Research, Research, Research
   Schedule an appropriate time to research companies you are applying to. You can also check with your local disability advocacy groups to assess hiring stats as well as reputation for hiring people with disabilities. Knowing the culture of a company will help you determine if it’s the right fight for you in addition to your disabilities. Check out the company website, social media platforms and even read their annual report if available. These resources will help give you a broader picture of the company culture before you decide to apply for employment with the company. It will also help you align your skills as well as goals with the company. This will bring more value to your portfolio if you can communicate this on your resume and during your interview. Having knowledge of the company you are seeking employment with demonstrates your commitment and motivation for the company.

3. Know When to Share Your Disability
   Sharing your disabilities upfront with employers may reflect a confident person on
your part. Rule of thumb: have resources in place to compensate for your disability while performing the job. This demonstrates your problems solving and critical thinking skills!

Although federal law states you aren’t required to reveal your disability to prospective employers unless it relates to completing essential job functions, being open on this subject won’t hurt.

4. Prepare for Your Interview Accommodations

If you will need a guide dog, interpreter, etc. be sure to notify the employer. This will help them prepare in advance for your interview and lessen the chances of an uncomfortable visit.

Understand that regardless of how much you prepare, some people will still have prejudices with hiring people with disabilities. Stay focused on your goal of winning employment. Try sharing examples of how you handled such experiences in a positive manner by demonstrating your soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving, team work, etc.

About the Author

Connie Russell Gorum is the CEO of C. L. Russell Group, LLC, a workforce training and consulting company. For more information on CLRG, visit clrussellgroup.com.

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

The FDIC recognizes the importance of contributions made by diverse communities in its workforce and business activities. As a leader among government agencies, we are committed to diversity and inclusion and providing opportunities for employment, contracting, investments, and sharing our expertise in financial education. As we continue to strengthen stability and public confidence in the nation’s financial system, we are leveraging the talents of our workforce and small-, minority-, women-, LGBT-, and veteran-owned businesses to create business value and achieve a work environment of involvement, respect, and connection.
Every October, we at SourceAmerica mount a full-court press to share the message that fuels our mission: People with disabilities represent an untapped talent source, one that adds not just to the social value of an inclusive workplace but also measurable financial benefits to the bottom line.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. SourceAmerica has a national nonprofit network comprising hundreds of other nonprofits across the country. Our mission is to create employment opportunities and choices for people with disabilities. An estimated 80 percent of people with disabilities is currently left out of the workforce. Roughly 24 million Americans have a significant disability. To put that into perspective, that’s the population of Washington, Massachusetts, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and North Carolina combined. The Return on Disability Group’s report, *Translate Different into Value*, 2016 Annual Report: *The Global Economics of Disability*, estimates more than $150 billion in lost tax revenue each year due to this low rate of employment.

From the SourceAmerica perspective, this is a national crisis. Employing people with disabilities is not just the right thing to do from an altruistic perspective; it makes good business sense. We’re saving the government money, and not just because people who might otherwise be receiving entitlements are earning a paycheck. According to a recent study by Mathematica Policy Research, the U.S. government saves seven to fourteen cents for every dollar it spends on services and products from SourceAmerica’s network of nonprofits. Through that network, people are getting trained and positioned for career success.

Anthony Green struggled to find work after he was discharged from the Navy. An IT professional by training, Green’s diagnosed bipolar disorder spun him into a cycle of depression that left him unable to work. At one point homeless, Green found the support he needed to turn his life around at Palmetto Goodwill in Charleston, South Carolina.

He started as an entry-level food services worker at Joint Base Charleston. Five years later, he’s now assistant project manager for the agency’s largest custodial contract. He runs the local self-advocacy program for people with disabilities, where he trains colleagues how to speak up for themselves with local, state and national lawmakers. He married and bought a home. He shares the story of his journey as a member of the SourceAmerica Speakers Bureau. He’s a force multiplier who contributes to the economy and the disability community.

“If I don’t move on any further than where I am now, assistant project manager after being a food service worker, a cook, a supervisor and now an assistant project manager, I’ve done
everything I wanted to do,” Green said. “I own my house now. I’m happy. I have a great wife, I have three dogs, a white picket fence – everybody should have that opportunity.”

Jeff Carver also faced challenges when his 22-year Army career ended due to a service-related injury. He sent out hundreds of resumes after he was medically discharged. He eventually landed an entry-level position in 2011 with InspriTec, another SourceAmerica member nonprofit. He began working in the company’s call center and learning all he could about his new career field. Promotion after promotion followed.

“When I walk in here, it’s like going back in the Army,” Carver said. “You kind of focus on the same mission, taking care of service members, family members and veterans.”

He’s now almost finished a business degree as he oversees 240 wounded warriors, veterans with disabilities and others as deputy director of InspriTec’s Defense Manpower Data Center in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Carver and his team take more than 134,000 calls per month from service members with questions about military benefits and other issues.

It’s not just people with disabilities who benefit when their talent is put to work. Our nonprofits also partner with commercial entities, like cosmetics startup Blush & Whimsy. Two years ago when owner Micaela Brown launched her line of all-natural, cruelty-free products that change color based on the person wearing the lipstick, she found warehousing, packaging and shipping solutions through Adelante Development Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She considers the nonprofit agency an indispensable partner as her business has grown.

Brown was invited to include her lipsticks in the gift bags for the Grammy Awards, Emmy Awards, the Academy Awards and the Cannes Film Festival. With each lipstick sold, the meticulous hand packaging performed by people with disabilities includes a card describing the importance of inclusion and her partnership with Adelante.

“They’ve really become a foundation of my business,” Brown said of Adelante. “Their mission aligns so closely to mine, it made perfect sense to partner with a nonprofit that takes care of its employees and really works hard to empower the individual. That’s exactly what I’m trying to do with Blush & Whimsy… We are all important, we are all valued. To have Adelante embody that, it just gives me goose bumps every single day. There is no better fit for my company and what we’re trying to achieve.”

The success stories from our network are encouraging starting points of the inclusion economy we’re working to build. October and NDEAM is the time to celebrate that and to encourage more employers, employees and corporate partners to recognize its importance. As people with disabilities continue to advance in the workplace with the support of employers and coworkers who recognize their potential, we’re making headway against those daunting statistics.

~24 million Americans have a significant disability
Detroit Business Owner an Advocate for Executive Education Lessons that Helped Propel Company to Global Leadership

“As a business owner, I am always trying to educate myself,” says Lane Coleman, a service-disabled veteran and minority business owner. “There’s your network, an association or a way that a book tells you to do things, but when you sit in executive courses with people who are actually making things happen, you learn there’s a way things get done.”

Coleman, a Navy veteran and executive with deep experience in defense, aerospace and petrochemicals, is referring to the invaluable lessons he learned at Dartmouth’s Tuck School of Business Minority Business Program. He is the founder, president and CEO of Detroit-based Strike Group, a global leader in warehousing, distribution, sustainment logistics and commodity sourcing solutions. Strike Group was the veteran-owned small business of 2013 for the State of Michigan and is certified Disability:IN (formerly USBLN), Disadvantaged Business Enterprises/Department of Transportation, Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Business, HUBZone, and Minority Business Enterprise.

Through the Tuck program, 24 annual scholarships support certified minority entrepreneurs in a tailored, immersive program — at the country’s oldest graduate business school.

Actionable Lessons
Coleman recalls numerous actionable lessons from the “top-flight” instructors he encountered at Tuck, calling them “the cream of the crop.”

“One important lesson learned that we use to this day relates to our accounts payable terms,” Coleman says. “If we pay invoices within ten days of receipt, we take an additional two percent discount. What that translates into in terms of margins is significant. You do that enough times and the increase to the bottom line is powerful.”

And that’s just one example of how executive education has positively impacted his business. “I’m retired military and an engineer, so I’m the guy always putting deals together. I can do that pretty well, but with each of these educational opportunities — and I’ve completed quite a few of them — I learn something else, make another connection, get a little better.”

Sharing the Experience with Other Leaders
The lessons, networking and prestige of Tuck continue to pay dividends, which Coleman further learned to share with others.

“People ask me about it all the time and wonder, ‘What’d you do there? How did you get involved with this?’” he says. “It’s impressive and a conversation starter, and I urge other business owners to take advantage of such opportunities. I want one of our executive team members to experience it, too. He has an MBA from Chapel Hill, but I know he’d still benefit.”

And in addition to spreading the word, Coleman also became aware of other executive education programs and an organization he is now part of, the National Business League, from fellow Tuck participants.
“Back to School” for Specific Reasons

Obviously an enthusiastic proponent of executive education and its supporters, Coleman believes that every experienced entrepreneur should go but attend with a specific goal in mind.

“At a certain point in our lives, we know our enabling objectives. A nice thing about executive courses is that you’re there for specific reasons and to accomplish specific things,” Coleman says. “It’s very focused. Taking time away is a big commitment, but it’s worth it. I’m so thankful for those at the university as well as the companies that supported my involvement.”

“Experiences like the ones Lane shares are exactly why we’re proud to continue our work with Tuck through the Wells Fargo Scholarship Fund for Diverse Businesses,” says Regina O. Heyward, senior vice president and head of Wells Fargo Supplier Diversity. “Diverse-owned businesses create jobs and support families in every small and large city in the U.S.”

Coleman closes the reflection on his experience at Tuck by painting a word picture of the Dartmouth campus, from its beautiful setting to the state-of-the-art graduate building, walkability and amenities. “It’s all first class,” he enthuses. Indeed: Tuck’s Minority Business Program is consistently ranked as one of the top in the world. No wonder it draws such praise and has such an inspirational impact on minority-owned businesses.

About Tuck’s Minority Business Program

Tuck’s Minority Business Program started in 1980 and is the oldest program designed to develop diverse business owners at an academic graduate business school. Since its inception, more than 7,000 business owners have participated in the programs. Diverse business owners interested in applying for a Wells Fargo Scholarship should contact Tuck Diversity Programs at 603-646-9287 or Tuck.Diversity.Programs@tuck.dartmouth.edu. Scholarship applications can be completed at http://mbp.tuck.dartmouth.edu/scholarship/apply-for-scholarship/
Build Relationships to Win the Contract

A word with Heather Cox, president of Certify My Company

Certify My Company is the national leader in transforming Fortune 1000 supplier diversity programs into profit centers. As experts in all key diversity certifications we enable clients to reach or exceed the 133 percent ROI that established supplier diversity programs can deliver. We are a trusted partner in growing standard setting programs—unlocking the potential to certify more Tier I & Tier II suppliers and filling the pipeline with future suppliers who we have vetted and prepared.

How has Diversity:IN helped your business?
Disability:IN certification gives me, and business owners like me an unbelievable access to opportunity. By affording us introductions to potential corporate clients, and other diverse businesses that also procure goods and services, as well as educational programming to better our businesses and scale our capability, they work to position DOBEs and DVOBEs to be ready when opportunity presents itself.

How do you approach winning contracts?
All my contracts were gained by perseverance and relationships. Whether it be at the Disability:IN conference, other business conference, or a trade event, I prepare to meet the right people or be on the right stage. Once the first step is established, it is all about following up and cultivating that relationship.

One of our largest client took more than 6 years from initial meeting to contract signing. When I met them, they already had a consultant and were happy with her work. We are in a very niche industry, not many people do what we do, and they were working well with their current consultant. When that consultant decided to close up shop and move on to other opportunities, the corporation remembered me from all those conferences and all those emails, and they called immediately. We are very good at what we do, so that—combined with years of friendly, respectful persistence—was the perfect path to creating a beautiful and mutually beneficial relationship.

What advice can you give others?
Show up! We are all busy. Time is our most precious commodity, but nothing happens if you don’t show up. Every single person you meet at these events has something to offer; a connection, a piece of information, a good laugh, a useful experience. And you never know what you will walk away with.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned?
Never underestimate anyone! Everyone has something to offer.

25% of all customers either have a disability or have a close friend or relative who has a disability

Source: U.S. Census
Commitment to Access and Inclusion

JPMorgan Chase values the unique insights that people of all abilities bring to our workforce, our supply chain and our diverse communities. Together we are making inclusion and accessibility cornerstones of how we do business around the globe.

For more information please visit jpmorganchase.com/supplierdiversity
What is DOBE Certification?

Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE) certification is granted to businesses that are at least 51 percent owned, operated, controlled, and managed by a person with a disability. With this certification, disability-owned businesses have increased access to contracts offered by large corporations and market advantages over competitors. As a group that is considered to be “disadvantaged” in the U.S., disability-owned businesses are often more attractive to large businesses involved in national, state, and local supply chains.

These traits are unique and special, setting an individual with a disability above others. For business owners with disabilities, this distinction is an asset within the corporate world. A “disadvantage” can become a positive advantage, letting business owners join a diverse global supply chain where every voice can be heard and possibilities are endless.

Benefits of Diversity & Inclusion

Disabilities come in a variety of shapes and sizes, just like business owners. Though many people tend to view disabilities as an obstacle, these traits are unique and special, setting an individual with a disability above others. For business owners with disabilities, this distinction is an asset within the corporate world. A “disadvantage” can become a positive advantage, letting business owners join a diverse global supply chain where every voice can be heard and possibilities are endless.

Why Get Certified

Disability:IN created the Disability Supplier Diversity Program to help disability-owned businesses expand through a diverse supply chain. By certifying your business, you have access to increased resources and a more level playing field than non-certified disadvantaged business owners. Disability:IN offers supplier events, webinars, monthly teleconferences, better business opportunities, a scholarship program, and a Mentoring & Business Development Program to help you better your business opportunities and operations.

Large companies and corporations are becoming increasingly interested in creating diverse supply chains, which opens several opportunities for diverse businesses. Adding a certification to your business can also improve

ECONOMIC INCLUSION & SUPPLIER DIVERSITY.

WE CARE
WE BELIEVE
WE DELIVER

At Merck, we care about the well-being of the people of the world. We develop and deliver innovative medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies, and animal health products to improve the lives of millions across the globe. We believe our diverse suppliers provide a source of innovation to help us better serve our customers. Merck is committed to delivering on its commitment to provide diverse suppliers with the opportunities to innovate, grow, and succeed in its mission. Together we can help the world be well.
Driving Economic Prosperity through Supplier Diversity Excellence and Thought Leadership.

Find more information about how the CVS Health Supplier Diversity program is shaping the future of health care at cvshealthsupplierdiversity.com
your reputation within your industry, community, and network, making your company more attractive to individuals and businesses alike. The DOBE certification opens the door to networking and matchmaking events throughout the country, allowing you to make connections and relationships with important corporate contacts.

**How to Get Certified**

To certify your company through Disability:IN, you must meet specific requirements. Read through the questions below to see if you qualify for a DOBE certification:

- Do you have a physical and/or mental disability that substantially impairs one or more major life activities?
- Do you own a majority (at least 51%) of your business? Can you verify this through supporting financial and business documents?
- Is your business independent and not significantly reliant on another business for day-to-day operations?
- Are you involved in the day-to-day operations and management of your company, including decision-making?
- Are you able and willing to submit the business and financial information required by Disability:IN? This information will be used to evaluate your eligibility for this certification and will be confidentially reviewed in a secure, permanent environment.
- Are you interested in increasing your access to business dealings with private sector corporations who want to do business with DOBE-certified businesses?

**Disability-Owned Business**

A business that is 51 percent owned, controlled, operated, and managed by a person(s) with a disability.

**Veteran Disability-Owned Business Enterprise**

A business that is 51 percent owned, controlled, operated, and managed by a veteran, but disability was not incurred during their time of service.

**Service-Disability Veteran Disability-Owned Business Enterprise**

A business that is 51 percent owned, controlled, operated, and managed by a veteran, who sustained their disability during their time of service.

If you are ready and interested in pursuing this certification, start the process by completing the application offered by the Disability:IN at disabilityin.org.

Source: Disability:IN
THE VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS.

A key component to Northrop Grumman’s success is its diverse supply base. A diverse supply base creates an environment of inclusion and promotes innovation and creativity. Ultimately, it reflects and strengthens the communities we live and work in and makes the world a safer place.

THE VALUE OF PERFORMANCE.

www.northropgrumman.com
Let's Get Uncomfortable About Disability

By Meg O’Connell President, Global Disability Inclusion, LLC

S
omtimes it’s challenging to take an honest look at reality. We want to believe our society is tolerant, open-minded, and inclusive. Recently, the British media agency UM surveyed 2,000 people to research stereotypes in advertising and found that when it comes to how society perceives people with disabilities, we have a lot of work to do. According to UM’s research, 62 percent of respondents admitted to feeling “uncomfortable” when seeing people with disabilities in advertisements. Considering people with disabilities are one of the largest minority groups, representing 15 percent of the global population, exposure to disability should be commonplace.

Media is one of society’s most powerful influencers. Images of people who are different from us or have a different story, culture, or ability challenge our perceptions and help us see people in a new light. However, while there are many characters on TV and in movies with disabilities, according to the Ruderman White Paper on the Employment of Actors with Disabilities in Television, 95 percent of those characters are played by non-disabled actors. These portrayals aren’t doing enough to change perceptions about real disabilities. How do we begin to make progress? We need to get uncomfortable about disability.

Looking back at the last few decades, we can see that all significant social change started with getting uncomfortable. Through frequent and accurate representation in mainstream media, many groups have slowly changed societal norms and perceptions, shattered stereotypes, and found acceptance. Let’s look at three well-known examples where media influenced social change.

Portrayal of African Americans

Until the 1970s, African-Americans were virtually non-existent in American media. When producer Norman Lear blazed the trail with shows like Sanford and Son and Good Times, African Americans and interracial couples were finally represented in mainstream media. And let’s face it, this made many people uncomfortable. But in the 1980s, the mega-successful The Cosby Show—the most-watched show in America for five years—positively changed the perception of the African-American family.

The LGBT Community

The journey is similar for the LGBT community. In the 1970s, Norman Lear again broke barriers by introducing us to gay characters in small roles on shows like The Jeffcoppers and All in the Family. But it took 20 more years before Americans would embrace gay characters on primetime shows like Will & Grace, a show that paved the way for more television series to feature LGBT characters. Today, LGBT characters are frequently seen in advertising and in television shows for kids, such as Disney Channel’s Andi Mack and Nickelodeon’s The Loud House.

Powerful Women

The evolution of the American woman has been reflected in media as well. In the 1950s, we had June Cleaver in Leave it to Beaver, who rarely left the house. In the 1970s, we had Mary Richards from the Mary Tyler Moore Show, who was an independent career woman. And now we have Selina Meyer in Veep, the first female Vice President of the United States, portrayed by Julia Louis-Dreyfus.

For these groups, representation in the mainstream media directly contributed to societal acceptance. Facing our discomfort on a topic helps us advance our thinking and change our perspectives. At the same time, there are ramifications for business. While representation eventually led to societal acceptance, it was imperative for companies to begin to market to new groups through inclusive advertising, to be competitive and grow market share. Model and Brand Ambassador for consulting firm Global Disability Inclusion Shaholly Ayers said, “By limiting what we deem socially acceptable in advertising, film, and print, we are making a silent statement about who we find acceptable within society.”

People with disabilities cross all genders, races, ethnicities, and ages, and disability will increase with age. A recent study by the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI) found that one-third of Millennial professionals have a disability, which is a higher rate than baby boomers or Gen-Xers. From a business standpoint, marketing to Millennials through inclusive advertising is “ripe for the picking.” Millennials make up 30 percent of the population, and according to Fool.com, by 2020, Millennials will have a collective spending power of more than $1.4 trillion. The Millennial generation is brand loyal, loves social media, and constitutes 58 percent of mobile shoppers. It seems like this is a generation that is ready to embrace the “uncomfortable.”

The bottom line is, to get comfortable with disabilities, we must first face our discomfort. So, get uncomfortable. And to the companies out there using models and actors with disabilities, we thank you for challenging the way the world perceives disability.
October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)—a time to celebrate the skills and talents that people with disabilities bring to America’s workplaces and economy.

How will you take part? Visit dol.gov/ndeam to:
- Download or order the official NDEAM poster
- Learn ways that you and your organization can participate
- Find ready-to-publish NDEAM articles, press releases, resource toolkits and more
Diversity & Inclusion is a vital part of what we do at Fannie Mae.
Diversity & Inclusion is a vital part of what we do at Fannie Mae.

A diverse company serving a diverse country. At Fannie Mae, we see you for who you are.

To learn about the In-Visible Inclusion ERG – an employee-led resource group – as well as Fannie Mae programs that promote diversity and inclusion in the heart of housing, visit fanniemae.com/diversity.

Want to use your talents at a company that values diverse backgrounds and perspectives? Visit fanniemae.com/careers.

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A manufacturing facility can be a dangerous place. Industrial machines clip and whir at a frenetic pace. Forklifts carrying loads topping hundreds of pounds are in constant motion. Even the sheer repetitiveness of certain tasks can cause injury if proper form isn’t consistently maintained each minute of each day.

The potential for injury, then, speaks volumes about the safety standards at the Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) manufacturing plant in Bainbridge, Georgia. The facility’s last lost-time accident was more than 200 days ago, and before that, it had been several years since an injury took someone off the production floor. All things considered, the plant sees 50 percent fewer accidents than other similar factories.

And 75 percent of its workforce is legally blind.

“While many might assume that the plant has instituted mass automation or paternalistic safety measures, that’s simply not the case,” said GIB Operations Director Mike Jackson. “By and large,” he said, “the plant is run like any other facility of its sort. People are trained to do a job. They stick to their training, and the operation runs smoothly.”

“We do the same thing any manufacturing industry does,” remarked Jackson. “We are no different than any other manufacturing facility … except that three out of four of our employees are blind.”

The plant’s mandate that 75 percent of its production workforce be blind or low vision—amounting to legal blindness—comes from the federal government. Even then, it receives no state or federal funding, operating every year based entirely on product sales. All of GIB’s 88 employees are state employees, the vast majority of who work in Bainbridge, though GIB has smaller sites in Griffin and at Robins Air Force Base. Their average wage is more than $10.50 an hour.

The driving mission behind everything that GIB does, Jackson said, is helping individuals with disabilities find meaningful careers, mirroring the mission of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), of which GIB is a part.

“We believe that everyone can work. We firmly believe that,” Jackson said. “You have to have the right person to do the right job, and we do it the same way here, making sure every-
one’s skills are optimized for what they’re asked to do.”

And the tasks GIB employees complete on a day-to-day basis are as varied as the products the organization sells and to whom it sells them. The federal government is GIB’s largest buyer, and the bulk of what it purchases are file folders for the office and pillows for military members. The Georgia Department of Transportation buys all of its safety vests from GIB. Smaller businesses have GIB do their screen printing. Altogether, GIB sells hundreds of different products, all of which can be purchased on their website at buygib.com.

GIB has also partnered with the Georgia Department of Agriculture in its Georgia Grown initiative, which promotes the sale of products made entirely from products farmed or made in the state.

The quality of all GIB products and processes has been recognized in the organization’s reception of ISO9001-2015 certification. This certification is given to operations that have achieved the highest standards in product quality, quick turnaround time on orders and general customer satisfaction.

GVRA Executive Director Sean T. Casey said that GIB is a strong example of how individuals with disabilities can not only succeed in the workforce, but flourish.

“Georgia Industries for the Blind exemplifies the capability of members of the workforce who have disabilities,” he said. “When you watch the production floor, you don’t see challenges. All you see is competence and skill.”

75% of the plant’s production workforce is blind or low vision

are file folders for the office and pillows for military members. The Georgia Department of Transportation buys all of its safety vests from GIB. Smaller businesses have GIB do their screen printing. Altogether, GIB sells hundreds of different products, all of which can be purchased on their website at buygib.com.

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The quality of all GIB products and processes has been recognized in the organization’s reception of ISO9001-2015 certification. This certification is given to operations that have achieved the highest standards in product quality, quick turnaround time on orders and general customer satisfaction.

GVRA Executive Director Sean T. Casey said that GIB is a strong example of how individuals with disabilities can not only succeed in the workforce, but flourish.

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Are You Using Your Student Disability Services on Campus?

Tips for Transitioning to College with a Learning Disability

By Sereen Suleiman

Grading from high school and getting accepted into college can be an exciting time for students. At the same time, it’s also a transition period that leads to new change and growth. This may not be a problem for the average student, but for students with learning disabilities, this transition can be an overwhelming process. The irony, though, is that more students with learning disabilities are getting accepted into colleges each year. Therefore, it’s even more critical to address this question: Why is this crucial transition process so difficult for students with learning disabilities?

Overpowering Independence and No Self-Advocacy = Struggle

Part of the reason could be that students with learning disabilities in the K–12 level receive their accommodations through federal laws, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or have psychological evaluations. Nonetheless, students with learning disabilities in college, some aren’t even aware that they must disclose their disabilities to the college to receive accommodations! Even more surprising is that some of the students who do know also do not make an attempt to disclose their disability. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), additional reasons for this hesitancy include:

- A desire to establish an identity independent of their disability
- Having a high school transition plan that did not specify postsecondary accommodations
- Being unaware about what kinds of disability services are available in college or how to access them
- A fear of receiving no response or a negative response from faculty who may not know much about certain disabilities
- Having a high school transition plan that does not specify postsecondary accommodations
- Being unconfident about something that these students are hesitant about.

Why is this the case? Of course, there is a multitude of factors, but research has stated that a key cause of this stumbling block is that the school system focuses on curriculum rather than focusing on self-advocacy of the students themselves in terms of preparation for college. In fact, according to research conducted at Walden University, when students with disabilities enter college, some aren’t even aware that they must disclose their disabilities to the college to receive accommodations! Even more surprising is that some of the students who do know also do not make an attempt to disclose their disability. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), additional reasons for this hesitancy include:

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This is why self-advocacy is critical for students with disabilities to acquire, because this skill would allow these students to not only be confident in themselves but also confident enough to rely on themselves to explain their disabilities and receive accommodations. More importantly, self-advocacy will also be a handy skill to apply as soon as these students enter the workforce.

Advice for Students

Seek out any resources that can assist you with self-advocacy, self-confidence, and self-worth, whether it is through means of a psychologist, counselor, organizations, friends, parents, or group conversations. Additionally, I highly encourage you save all your documentation of your diagnosis for both your own records and for the records of the disabilities accommodation program of your respective college.

To make the transition easier, do some background research on the college of your choice and see which accommodations they provide for students with learning disabilities. Take a tour of the college campus and see where your classes are located. Another option is to go to community college prior to transferring to a four-year university. In fact, this is the route I took, as I believed going to a four-year university was too dramatic a change for me. As a result, I spent three years at a community college completing a majority of my science and math classes, getting familiar with the feel of a college campus, and figuring out how to apply for disability accommodations (on my own, of course). Today, I still believe that the transfer route was the best decision I’ve ever made, both academically and financially. Nonetheless, you must still be proactive into discovering the route that is best for you. The sooner you start self-advocating for yourself, the better your chance for not only graduating from college but also being successful in life.

Education Act or have psychological evaluations as well as an individualized education program (IEP) via psychologists working for their schools or school districts. I can speak of this through my own experience, as my school psychologist diagnosed me with a learning disability while I was in kindergarten. I received an IEP document specifying the services and support I would need for school. However, this all changes when students enter college. Instead of the school administrations taking the responsibility of immediately providing accommodations for students, now the students have to be proactive and seek out accommodation services that their colleges offer on their own … something that these students are hesitant about.

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Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

1 in 9 undergraduates (11.1%) disclosed some kind of disability to their college between 2011-2012, and only 1 in 20 undergraduates (4.8%) reported having learning disabilities.
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ORAU is no longer a secret in the Secret City

Oak Ridge Associated Universities, better known as ORAU, is no longer a secret in Oak Ridge, Tenn. Nestled near the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Oak Ridge is nicknamed the Secret City after its role in the top-secret Manhattan Project that helped create the first atomic bomb.

Established in 1946, ORAU's purpose was to advance science and technology education and research by providing member universities access to atomic energy research facilities. Holding true to the original purpose today, ORAU provides exceptional talent in innovative scientific and technical solutions to advance national priorities and serve the public interest by integrating academic, government and scientific resources globally. Through specialized teams of experts, unique laboratory capabilities and access to a consortium of more than 100 major Ph.D.-granting institutions, ORAU works with federal, state, local and commercial customers to advance national priorities and serve the public interest.

ORAU also manages the Oak Ridge Institute of Science and Education (ORISE) for the U.S. Department of Energy, which is a DOE asset dedicated to enabling critical scientific, research and health initiatives of the department and its laboratory system by providing world-class expertise in STEM workforce development, scientific and technical reviews and the evaluation of radiation exposure and environment contamination.

While ORAU itself has been one of the best-kept secrets in East Tennessee, its reputation regarding the company's culture and diversity practices is quickly spreading as seen in a recent employee survey.

The survey showed that 93 percent of the employees know what is expected of them in the workplace, 87 percent reported that they are proud to work at the company and 87 percent of all employees believe they are treated with dignity and respect.

According to Culture Amp, a worldwide employee feedback and analytics platform, companies with 500 employees but fewer than 1,000 employees can anticipate about a 70 percent employee participation rate in general surveys. ORAU greatly exceeded that standard with an overall participation rate of 87 percent.

To ensure a culture that maintains these incredible ratings, ORAU welcomes feedback from employees through surveys and information-sharing teams, such as its Diversity Council and Employee Relations Team, comprised of employees from across the organization.

With an overall corporate favorability score of 77 percent and with 71 percent of ORAU employees believing the corporate culture is favorable, it is no longer a secret that ORAU is a great place to work.

For nine consecutive years, ORAU has been recognized as a Best Diversity Company and is in competition for the current year. ORAU defines diversity as all of the ways in which we differ and all of those differences are welcomed and respected in the workplace and the community.

For more information on ORAU and its employment opportunities, visit www.orau.org.
ORAU is proud to be named a diversity-friendly organization!

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ORAU provides innovative scientific and technical solutions for the Department of Energy and other federal and commercial organizations to advance national priorities in science, education and health. We do this by integrating unique laboratory capabilities, specialized teams of experts and a consortium of more than 100 universities.

For more information on ORAU and its employment opportunities, visit www.orau.org.
Two years ago, I was about to enter my first year of college. Now, as I am entering junior year, I have found that college with a chronic condition is a challenge, but it is possible to have an equally amazing experience as your peers.

Accommodations on college campuses are meant to be used, but far too often I see my peers with disabilities not registered at the campus disability services office. You certainly put yourself at a great disadvantage if you do not request accommodations by registering at your disability student services. Even if you feel that you will not use them now, register because you never know when you may need them, especially if you have an unpredictable condition.

My journey with a severe form of ulcerative colitis began when I was six years old. The tumultuous ride of hospitalizations, incessant fatigue, and numerous procedures made me spend more time at home than at school. I learned about my rights due to my ulcerative colitis in middle school when my disease became severe and when I was called into the dean’s office because my absences became quantifiably excessive. Finally, after dealing with an emotional burden and lots of questions, I found that I was eligible for a 504 plan, allowing me to receive accommodations at school. Now as an advocate, here are some things you should know if you live with a chronic condition in college.

It’s never too early to register at your Disability Student Services (DSS). While each college campus will differ in the accommodations offered, it is important to find and keep them available at the time of need. I remember the summer before my first year at Indiana University, my mom forced me to visit the DSS, even though I pleaded with her that it was too early. In fact, it was not too early, and I benefitted from not having to fill out the lengthy and often convoluted application papers during classes and the first-year experience. Therefore, visit your DSS office as soon as possible.
More than 2.4 million postsecondary students with a disability attend college in the U.S.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Meal plans may not be for you. At my university, first-year students are required to purchase a meal plan. I visited the few dining halls on my campus and determined that the foods would not suit my dietary needs. I contacted the dietary services, and with a physician’s note, I was allowed to buy my own food and not purchase a meal plan. While I did not have a kitchen to cook, it was a possibility had I requested special housing.

Housing accommodations are an option. A major symptom of my form of ulcerative colitis is that I have to use the restroom frequently and sometimes for long periods of time. During my first year at Indiana University, I lived in a less-than-ideal dorm but could request a single room (though it was without a restroom). Had I known my accommodations fully beforehand, I would have requested a private bathroom, something that would have made my life significantly easier. Contact your housing services for any unique accommodations to have a comfortable living experience.

Schedules can be made to suit your needs. During the second semester of my freshman year, I was prescribed a certain procedure every week. This was difficult because I had quite a few classes (including labs and discussion groups) and I ended up having to walk to my procedures every week. I alerted my professors that I may be late due to these appointments, which sometimes resulted in extended pain. You may be able to sign up for your classes before everyone else to have a schedule that best suits your needs.

Whether it’s attending office hours to get that extra help or if it requesting special accommodations during exams, it is of incredible importance to speak up and be your own advocate. I often take exams separately and make sure my professors are aware of my accommodations, so there are no misunderstandings. While my first year at Indiana University was a learning experience, as I enter my third year, I have found the importance of self-advocacy and knowing my accommodations well. If you ever find yourself struggling, know that there are so many others who have to navigate through the rough waters of living with chronic illnesses in college.

Duke's collective success depends on the robust exchange of ideas – an exchange that is best when the rich diversity of our perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences flourish. It is essential all members of the community feel secure and welcome; the contributions of all individuals are respected, and all voices are heard.

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Advocating for an Inclusive World
Stevie Wonder still keeping the dream alive

By Erica Sabino

The world may know Stevie Wonder as a legendary musical artist, but not everyone is aware of the many ways in which he influences the community beyond sharing his love for music. While music does play a big part in his life, the 25-time GRAMMY Award winner’s impact reaches way beyond the music industry and the people who listen to his work. He may be a celebrity, but Stevie Wonder is one famous figure who uses his popularity to influence positive change in the world for all people, for generations to come.

Stevland Hardaway Morris was born on May 13, 1950, in Saginaw, Michigan. Born prematurely, he experienced complications with the growth of blood vessels in his retinas, causing his blindness. That, however, did not hinder the child prodigy from learning to play multiple instruments at a young age. From the harmonica to the drums to the piano, Stevie taught himself how to play them all before he...
“Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn’t mean he lacks vision.”

—Stevie Wonder
reached the age of 10. He was also singing in his church choir by that time.

Stevie’s entrance to the music industry did not begin until he was discovered by singer and songwriter Ronnie White of The Miracles. He was then introduced to Berry Gordy, the founder of Motown Records, was given an audition, and later signed to the record label. It was Gordy who dubbed Stevie “Little Stevie Wonder,” which was changed to “Stevie Wonder” as he grew older.

And what a wonder he was. According to his biography in Rolling Stone, “[Stevie’s] third single, ‘Fingertips (Part 2)’ was a number 1 pop and R&B hit eight months later. Both on records and in live shows, he was featured playing harmonica, drums, piano, and organ, as well as singing—sometimes all in one number. During his first three years in show business, Wonder was often compared to Ray Charles—much was made of the fact that both were blind.”

But Stevie’s brilliance was his own. As he broke out into his career, Wonder became self-sufficient in the studio—writing his own music, playing his own instruments and even producing his own work. Noted in his Rolling Stone biography, the Signed, Sealed, Delivered singer also distinguished himself with music and lyrics “with such socially conscious subjects as ghetto hardship and political disenfranchisement.” It was not surprising that he was a lifelong advocate of nonviolent political change patterned after Martin Luther King Jr.

Stevie met Martin Luther King Jr. at a rally when he was just 15 years old. Three years following MLK’s assassination, Stevie joined in the decade-long movement to pass a bill that would make King’s birthday a national holiday. He composed the song “Happy Birthday,” which became a rallying song for the initiative. According to journalist Marcus Baram in an article at Cuepoint on Medium.com, “Wonder put his career on hold, led rallies from coast to coast, and galvanized millions of Americans with his passion and integrity.”

“Why should I be involved in this great cause?” Wonder asked as he addressed the crowd at an MLK rally. “As an artist, my purpose is to communicate the message that can better improve the lives of all of us.”

Through his career, Stevie Wonder created a platform to not only share his talents but also make a difference and inspire others to do the same. His many accomplishments can be at-
Musician Stevie Wonder receives the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree at the 129th Spelman College Commencement at the Georgia International Convention Center.

Contributed to his drive, his perseverance, and his determination, both as a musician and an advocate for the causes he believes in.

A true philanthropist, Stevie Wonder promotes AIDS awareness, donates to humanitarian relief efforts, and holds an annual House Full of Toys benefit concert to provide toys for children in need. Wonder has also worked on the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, the Children’s Diabetes Foundation, Junior Blind of America and the creation of the Wonder Vision Awards Program.

In 2009, Wonder was named a UN Messenger of Peace, with a focus on persons with disabilities by the United Nations in 2009. At the news conference to announce his new position, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon had this to say of Wonder: “I recognize that he has consistently used his voice and special relationship with the public to create a better and more inclusive world, to defend civil and human rights, and to improve the lives of those less fortunate. Stevie Wonder is a true inspiration to young people all over the world about
what can be achieved, despite any physical limitations.” In 2014, President Barack Obama awarded Wonder the nation’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Wonder was asked by The Guardian if he had ever considered “that it’s his ‘disadvantages’—being born blind and black—that have made him what he is.” To this, the award-winning artist responded, “You know, it’s funny, but I never thought of being blind as a disadvantage, and I never thought of being black as a disadvantage. I am what I am. I love me! And I don’t mean that egotistically—I love that God has allowed me to take whatever it was that I had and make something out of it.”

Stevie has found success both on and off the stage. Whether he is going on Twitter to encourage people to share their dreams, performing at the dedication ceremony of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture, attending a conference to learn about assistive technologies for the blind or visually impaired, or advocating for an international disabilities treaty, Wonder has continuously taken steps to make a positive impact with everything he does.

In 2013, Stevie met with young Viet Nam’s Got Talent singer Crystal (real name: Nguyen Phoung Anh) at the United Nations General Assembly to push jointly for greater inclusion for children with disabilities. Crystal, now 21, became a singing sensation when she auditioned for the popular show in 2012. She was born with osteogenesis imperfecta, or “glass-bone disease,” a genetic disorder causing fragile bones. “My bones have broken 30 times or more,” she says. “We stopped counting, because we thought it didn’t matter anymore.” The 16-year-old adds, “Crystal is my alter ego, because it is fragile and shiny.”

“No one should be excluded because they’re blind, or because of any disability or because of their status or their color,” Wonder said. “We cannot allow our differences to let our fear put dreams to sleep.”

In 2017, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) announced the presentation of the first Key of Life award to Stevie Wonder for his groundbreaking “contributions to the world through his music.” According to the association, future recipients of this honor will be given to “songwriters and composers who best exemplify [Stevie’s] legacy through their commitment to the art form he elevated through his talent, dedication and unparalleled heart.”

Stevie Wonder is a man who is driven by his beliefs. “You need to put your heart into making a difference,” Stevie told The Guardian. Upon receiving his key of Life Award, Wonder had this to say about an artist’s social power: “There’s always power in the work... So those of us who have been blessed with the gift of expression, don’t be afraid to express your truth. But do it with love. When you think about it, music is probably the most integrat-

(L-R) Recording artist Stevie Wonder, sons Kailand Morris and Mandla Morris, and designer Kai Milla attend the 4th Annual Kailand Obasi Hoop-Life Fundraiser at the USC Galen Center.

(L-R) Recording artist Stevie Wonder, sons Kailand Morris and Mandla Morris, and designer Kai Milla attend the 4th Annual Kailand Obasi Hoop-Life Fundraiser at the USC Galen Center.

Creating an Inclusive Workplace

People who are blind can be as effective as sighted people, yet they still experience social exclusion—both in job interviews and the workplace itself. Whether you work with someone who is blind or are thinking of hiring someone with a visual impairment, take note of these important techniques to ensure workplace inclusion.

Identify Everyone in the Room
Before a meeting begins, ask each person to identify herself, so that a blind employee will know who is in attendance and approximately where each person is sitting. If someone enters or leaves the room mid-meeting, acknowledge this with a brief mention so that everyone understands who is still present.

Make Communication Easier
There are simple things you can do to make information more accessible at work for blind coworkers. In addition to bringing hard copies to a meeting, send electronic materials ahead of time to ensure your blind colleague can read the material. Use a Word document format unless you have the ability to tag a PDF, adding descriptive text that is understandable by screen readers. If you are presenting, verbally describe any charts, tables, images or props aloud so everyone can follow along.

Ask About Accessible Technology
Many people who are blind need only a few simple accommodations to adapt their workspace. They usually bring their own devices to work. Ask your blind coworkers what they need to get the job done.

Speak Up
If you overhear colleagues making disparaging comments about a blind coworker or marginalizing them in any way, don’t ignore it. Speak up and let them know their behavior is not acceptable. If it continues, tell your manager. Remember to invite all staffers to fun social gatherings. If you post flyers for social events, remember to share them verbally.

Inform Others
Make your employees aware of the Americans with Disabilities Act and include a statement about being an equal opportunity employer on your internal communications and external job postings.

Train Your Team
Give your hiring managers and recruiters the tools they need to attract, interview, and onboard qualified candidates with disabilities.

Source: BlindNewWorld

Interview Tips for Employers
An interview is a necessary part of getting hired, but many candidates who are visually impaired never get that far because of barriers in the job-search process, especially during the interview. Consider these tips before interviewing a candidate who is blind:

Driver’s License. Don’t require documents that applicants who are blind won’t have. Use alternative methods to verify identity or legal employment status.

Job Fair. Embrace the opportunity at job fairs to find applicants with disabilities who are qualified, dedicated, and eager to work.

Website. Make your career website accessible to everyone by removing barriers like confusing navigation, inflexible font sizes, information identified only by color, etc.

Disclosure. Make it easy and comfortable for applicants to divulge a disability. Make it clear that your company welcomes employees with differing abilities and backgrounds.

Training. Train hiring managers, especially those with no previous experience working with people who are blind, to appreciate the skills and capabilities of every applicant.

Source: perkins.org
More than 1 million people have clicked “download” and made an account as a sighted volunteer on Be My Eyes, a smartphone app designed to enable blind and low-vision individuals to lead more independent lives. The app harnesses the power of technology and human connection and has revolutionized the concept of “micro-volunteering.” All it requires from a volunteer is a smartphone, an internet connection, and a couple of minutes to spare—but what it gives back to a volunteer is an important awareness and different perspective. When a blind or low vision user makes a Be My Eyes call, they’re connected with a sighted volunteer through a live video feed from their smartphone’s camera.

A typical Be My Eyes call, which lasts about two minutes, could make lives easier in the workplace for people who are blind or have low vision. It’s quick and easy with the potential to make a great impact in another person’s life. Volunteers supply visual assistance with a range of tasks, such as distinguishing food labels, navigating through a busy street, sorting through mail, reading birthday cards aloud, putting outfits together, recording music, shopping for the right shoe size, organizing a deck of cards, determining the next bus departure time, and much more.

The app launched in 2015, initially only available on iOS devices, and was made available for Android users in 2017. Volunteers are available in more than 150 countries worldwide and offer help in more than 180 different languages, making vision available, on demand, for blind and low-vision folks all over the world.

“Helping through Be My Eyes made me more concerned with issues like inclusion. I try to give more of my time, concern, and money for local projects that ensure safety and inclusion for people with disabilities.”

—Sasha, volunteer from Ukraine

Source: Be My Eyes
From One Goal to the Next

By Stephanie Corkett

A crowded room quiets as Parker Thornton approaches the podium. He has been tasked with motivating Special Olympics Athlete Health Messengers to commit to being fit every day by working out more, eating healthy, and cutting down on soda. He starts his speech by proclaiming the three words he says to himself in the mirror every day, “I’m happy, I’m healthy, and I feel fantastic!” Parker let those familiar words calm his nerves at speaking in front of the large crowd. After the speech has concluded, the audience erupts into applause, motivated and encouraged to take on the challenge of living a healthy life.

“I want to get people thinking about how they can make changes to better the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.”

—Parker Thornton

Parker’s life didn’t start at peak health. As a newborn, he contracted viral meningitis and was hospitalized at Boston’s Children’s Hospital for five weeks, much of it on life support. He survived his first challenge, but the result of the viral meningitis left Parker with significant learning disabilities, which resulted in an anxiety disorder and depression.

When Parker was eight years old, he was introduced to Special Olympics New Hampshire when local families came together to start a ski team for children with intellectual disabilities. That introduction has led to more than 28 years of involvement with Special
Parker has won numerous gold medals in sports ranging from basketball, golf, skiing, and pentathlons. “I realized that Special Olympics was more than just sports; it taught me how to be a better man, a proficient communicator, and how to be a mentor to other athletes who have their own challenges. Special Olympics tells you how to speak up, get healthy to be a better athlete, and blossom gifts in yourself and others,” Parker said.

Parker recently had an opportunity to make his own life healthier. “I wasn’t happy with my body, and I was depressed,” Parker said. He signed up for a sprint triathlon, which motivated him to train for seven months. Parker lost 20 pounds and was able to go off prescribed medication. Seeing a positive change in his body and completing the triathlon showed Parker that even if it takes hard work, he can accomplish whatever he sets his mind to.

Parker has set his mind to tackling new challenges in the last few years. He speaks frequently on topics related to disabilities, Special Olympics, and the health disparities of people with disabilities. “Inclusive health is such a big issue. No one understands the health differences between people with and without intellectual disabilities. I want to motivate and get people thinking about how they can make changes to better the lives of people with intellectual disabilities,” he said.

Parker is now a consultant for Special Olympics International. He lead an Athlete Health Messenger training for a new cohort of athlete leaders who are tasked with taking the charge for equal access to health for people with disabilities. He co-edits a monthly health newsletter that goes out to thousands of recipients and is continuously tasked with being called upon to give motivational speeches. Speaking fills Parker with a sense of purpose. He wants to motivate others to see people with intellectual disabilities as part of human diversity and should be celebrated as such.

Parker is planning on accomplishing his next goal in 2019: attending professional stunt school in California. “It’s been a lifelong dream of mine to get trained to do professional stunts like you see in the movies,” he said. “I can’t wait to see what’s next.”
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Adapted Outdoor Sports Help Heal
Hand cycling program taking off in Miami

By Chrystian Tejedor

Once a week, in Tamiami Park in Miami, Florida, a gazebo nestled among ubiquitous baseball fields becomes a garage for recreational therapy students and their professor. It’s where they tinker, swap out parts and manually adjust settings on long, squat futuristic-looking contraptions that are used by people with disabilities to bike.

These students are learning what it’s like to help people with disabilities accomplish something they thought was impossible, while getting first-hand experience in their future career. “A lot of employers want their recreational therapy providers to facilitate adapted sports,” said Tania Santiago Perez, the recreational therapy instructor who developed a partnership with Miami-Dade County’s Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Department to get the hand cycling program off the ground.

“They will need to know how to do this for the jobs available today at Veterans Affairs Hospitals and at municipal parks and recreation departments,” she added.

For Marcos Rodriguez, recreational therapy represents more than just a job. Since his aunt developed a rare illness that left her paralyzed, it’s become a calling. So as a first-time rider was eased into his hand cycle, Rodriguez volunteered to help the young man steer around the park’s half-mile loop.

After three trips around the baseball diamonds, Rodriguez was winded. “I feel great,” Rodriguez said, gulping in air. “Today, this is a learning experience for me, but I already feel rewarded by helping someone in need. Seeing him smile put a smile on my face as well.”

Enjoying a fun day outdoors is something Rodriguez says people who are recovering from injuries or who have disabilities should never do without.

Nancy Antoine, a senior majoring in computer science, hopes that participating in the hand cycling sessions will improve her mobility. Pedaling with her hands exercises a lot of the same muscles in her arms and shoulders that keep her steady on a walker.

“The walker does make me tired, and I have to take breaks occasionally,” said Antoine, who has cerebral palsy. “This exercise will help me. I need to get around, and I won’t let anything stop me.”

It takes four people to safely guide Antoine from her walker to the hand cycle, which sits inches from the ground. Recreation therapy students help adjust her seat and the straps and struts that keep her legs snug. Another person helps adjust the positioning of the hand cranks and gears and, for the moment, Antoine is ready to ride off on the trail.

After traveling a few yards, however, it becomes clear that Antoine is struggling to turn the bike’s large front tire. As the wheel turns, it rubs her calves, slows the bicycle and limits how far she can turn. It takes a few minutes more to diagnose the problem, and by trial-and-error, adjust the positioning of her legs and the straps that hold her in place so turning the bike becomes a smooth, fluid motion.

Before long, she’s underway again—for good this time—safely making the turn onto the paved trail and accelerating away into the warm breeze. After taking a few laps around the ball fields Antoine headed back to the gazebo.

“I’m tired, but it’s a good tired,” Antoine said. “I had a lot of fun today. I’m looking forward to riding more and becoming an expert.”

Source: news.fiu.edu
December 3rd is the International Day of People with Disabilities and the day AbleThrive hosts #ThriveWorldwide. It’s a global campaign to celebrate living life to the fullest and to bring visibility to life with a disability. Coordinated meet-ups around the world on that day bring together people with disabilities, families, allies and communities to build solidarity and have fun. Whether it’s a happy hour, a bowling outing or a group of friends coming together, each meet-up is anchored in shared values and shows what it means to thrive.

How can you participate?

✓ Take a photo with the #ThriveWorldwide hashtag and post it on social media (don’t forget the hashtag in the caption!)
✓ Join a meet-up on December 3rd or host your own.
✓ Share with your friends who believe in a more inclusive world.

For more information visit:
www.ablethrive.com/thriveworldwide2018 or email thriveworldwide@ablethrive.com to host your own meet-up.

#ThriveWorldwide is hosted by AbleThrive, a health engagement platform to adapt and thrive with a disability. Their mission is to give people with disabilities access to the resources they need to thrive and to foster inclusion by reframing the perception of disability in society.

For more information visit www.ablethrive.com
News Briefs

MICROSOFT’S $25 MILLION “AI FOR ACCESSIBILITY”

At Microsoft’s annual conference for software developers, CEO Satya Nadella announced Microsoft’s newest initiative, “AI for Accessibility.” The five-year $25 million initiative is to use artificial intelligence to build better technology for people with disabilities.

Source: finance.yahoo.com

FROM THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS TO CAPITOL HILL

Kayla McKeon has been participating in the Special Olympics for over a decade, competing in floor hockey, softball, bowling, soccer, track and field, as well as bocce. Now, the advocate for people with intellectual disabilities took on a new venture, Capitol Hill. Earlier this past summer McKeon made headlines when she became the first registered Capitol Hill lobbyist with Down syndrome.

Sources: specialolympics.org, washingtonpost.com, nbcnews.expressions.syr.edu

Heidi and Cole Hamels

STAR PITCHER DONATES $10 MILLION MANSION TO HELP SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN

MLB star pitcher Cole Hamels and his wife gave away their $9.75 million mansion and land to a Christian camp called “Camp Barnabas” for children with special needs and chronic illnesses. The 32,000 square foot mansion in Branson, Missouri, also sports more than 100 acres of land.

Source: theblaze.com

MICROSOFT

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella speaking at the annual Microsoft shareholders meeting in Bellevue, Wash. Microsoft is setting up a $25 million initiative to use artificial intelligence to build better technology for people with disabilities.

Microsoft

BILL McCOY/WEBIMAGE

FROM THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS TO CAPITOL HILL

Kayla McKeon

NBA OPENS WORLD’S FIRST SENSORY-INCLUSIVE RETAIL STORE

On World Autism Awareness Day, NBA’s flagship store in New York City opened its doors, becoming the world’s first sensory-inclusive retail store. “This is a 24/7/365 initiative of the store,” said Todd Jacobson, the NBA’s Senior VP of Social Responsibility. The store offers bags with noise-canceling headphones, fidget spinners, weighted lap bands and more to families and individuals who may need them.

Source: nba.com

ZINIU CHEN
PBS KIDS and Zappos Adaptive introduced a line of gender-neutral two-way reversible adaptive apparel with kid-friendly designs that promote independence for all children. Manufactured by 4WARD Clothing, the PBS KIDS Adaptive Apparel Collection is available exclusively at Zappos.com.

The PBS KIDS Adaptive Apparel Collection includes T-shirts and lounge pants designed to meet unique sensory needs. Each item includes dissolvable tags, has no buttons and is made with soft, machine-washable, poly-cotton blend fabric. The entire clothing line can be worn either forward or backward, making it versatile for kids.

Source: pbs.org
Making a Difference

Lauren Wasser

Model and activist Lauren Wasser’s life changed when she was 24—she had a below-the-knee amputation of her right leg after contracting toxic shock syndrome (TSS), a rare, life-threatening complication of certain types of bacterial infections due to tampon use. “I just lost it,” she recalled in an interview with The Washington Post. “I screamed and cried. I’m an athlete—my legs were everything. I had no idea what my life would be like without them.” Now 30, Wasser shares her story to spread awareness about TSS. Earlier this year, she decided to amputate her left leg, which was also affected by the condition.

Sources: people.com, teenvogue.com
Jen Bricker
Born without legs, Jen Bricker was given one rule from her adoptive parents, “Never say can’t.” And she didn’t. Now a successful acrobat and aerialist, Bricker, the author of Everything is Possible, experienced just how possible life can be when she found out her Olympic gold medalist idol, Dominique Moceanu, is her biological sister—revealed in Moceanu’s autobiography, Off Balance. Through her book, Bricker hopes to inspire readers and encourage them to follow their dreams.
Sources: jenbricker.com, stltoday.com

Francesco Clark
Fashion editor Francesco Clark’s career took a different turn after he suffered a spinal cord injury in a swimming accident. Clark’s injury caused severe skin problems, which led him to found Clark’s Botanicals, a natural skincare line now sold at 180 stores worldwide. The beauty entrepreneur donates a percentage of proceeds to the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, where he serves as a national ambassador. The foundation aims to cure spinal cord injury by funding innovative research and improving the quality of life for people living with paralysis.
Sources: hub.jhu.edu, wwd.com, clarksbotanicals.com
OrCam: Assisting people who are blind or visually impaired

The OrCam device harnesses the power of cutting-edge artificial vision technology to interpret visual information through the use of an intuitive smart camera mounted on the frames of the wearer’s eyeglasses, connected to a pocket-sized computer. OrCam recognizes text, products, and faces and relays information discreetly in the wearer’s ear through a personal earpiece.

Source: orcam.com

First bilateral amputee fitted with two LUKE arms

The LUKE arm is a modular prosthetic arm developed by DEKA Research & Development Corp (founded by Kamen). The LUKE arm is configurable for levels of amputation ranging from shoulder to forearm. The hand has multiple, preprogrammed grips using four powered degrees of freedom. Ron Currier is the first-ever bilateral amputee to be fitted with two LUKE Arms.

Source: Businesswire

New services for travelers with disabilities

AbiliTrek launched AbiliCheck, its newest service, which verifies that a hotel room booked on the website meets an individual’s specific accessibility needs.

When an AbiliTrek user books a hotel room, a member of the AbiliTrek team will contact the hotel to verify that the user’s needs can be met. Twenty-seven different accessibility options are available to be checked off by a user, along with any special requests. AbiliCheck uses this information to check directly with the hotel, then reports its findings with the user.

Source: abilitrek.com
ReWalk exoskeletons for individuals with lower limb disabilities

ReWalk Robotics Ltd. develops, manufactures and markets wearable robotic exoskeletons for individuals with lower limb disabilities as a result of spinal cord injury or stroke. The company’s mission is to fundamentally change the quality of life for individuals with lower limb disability through the creation and development of market leading robotic technologies. There are now 142 ReWalk certified private and VA SCI/D training centers across the United States available to train on the use of ReWalk. 

Source: ReWalk

iRobot home robots

iRobot designs and builds robots that make a difference. For example, iRobot’s series of home robots, such as the Roomba, is very helpful for people who cannot easily clean their homes with traditional equipment. These robots use localized navigation to clean their environments thoroughly. iRobot helps people find smarter ways to clean, and its defense and security robots protect those in harm’s way.

Source: iRobot Corp.

The WHILL state-of-the-art wheelchair

WHILL’s award-winning Model Ci enables people who have difficulty walking to experience movement in a new way and explore their world in comfort, confidence and style. The Model Ci is portable, yet very stable and durable. It features WHILL’s patented front omni-wheels, eliminating common caster wheel challenges, and it delivers best-in-class indoor/outdoor versatility. The Model Ci includes the latest in technology, Bluetooth and mobile data connectivity, for greater independence and peace-of-mind for both the user and their loved ones.

Source: whill.us
America’s veterans answered the call of duty, and many sacrificed in return. Now, more and more employers—both large and small—are stepping up to repay their sacrifice, at least in some small measure, by hiring veterans with disabilities. And in return their organization gets a loyal, team-oriented employee with job-ready skills.

Nearly 4 million veterans have a service-connected disability and are among the most resilient members of society. Therefore, it should go without saying that no veteran entering the workforce should ever fear discrimination. But recent research suggests a different reality.

The Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation found approximately 57 percent of veterans with disabilities entering the civilian workforce feared discrimination. And 45 percent of employers surveyed, as part of research conducted by DAV (Disabled American Veterans) and Monster, feel their work environment is not appropriate for veterans with disabilities, while 30 percent openly expressed concerns about veterans with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“Many employers don’t realize that when you hire veterans, they often come with a built-in set of benefits. Thanks to their military service, these benefits can include education, job training and medical benefits,” said Marc Burgess, DAV CEO.

The fact is, disabled veterans are a valuable addition to any workplace thanks to their unique experiences and skill sets.

To support employers, dispel myths and demonstrate the business case for hiring veterans with disabilities, DAV developed The Veteran Advantage: Guide to Hiring and Retaining Veterans with Disabilities. The first of its kind, the guide is being released this October in conjunction with National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

The free, comprehensive guide is the result of more than four years of study about what the veteran community contributes to the workforce and how hiring veterans, especially disabled veterans, can positively impact a company’s bottom line.

The 36-page publication features best practices for recruiting, hiring and retaining veterans with disabilities, with a comprehensive checklist to guide employers through each process. Also, the guide explains the financial incentives, tax credits and other supports available for employers, as well as numerous informative resources from the Departments of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Society for Human Resource Management.

“Many employers don’t realize that when you hire veterans, they often come with a built-in set of benefits. Thanks to their military service, these benefits can include education, job training and medical benefits,” said Marc Burgess, DAV CEO.

The guide also contains rich testimonials of veterans once seeking employment and now thriving in successful careers, as well as informative case studies from employers who successfully employ disabled veterans.

The insights and examples from companies that have incorporated veteran hiring best practices into their hiring and retention strategies are invaluable. As an example, Rob Ells, manager of the Roush Enterprises Veterans Initiative Program, discusses how veterans strengthen corporate culture. And Comcast NBCUniversal’s Carol Eggert, Senior Vice President of Military and Veteran Affairs, shares critical tips to kick-start veteran hiring programs.

DAV is working with a number of corporate partners including First Data and USAA, to help disseminate the guide. These organizations are not only sharing helpful practices with their internal human resource and hiring teams, they are reaching out to fellow industry leaders interested in hiring disabled veterans.

It’s time more hiring managers, business owners and leaders in the corporate community better understand that the nearly 4 million veterans with service-connected disabilities can be some of the most capable, driven and resilient employees on their team.

Download the free guide at DAV.org/veterans/employment-resources.
Join DAV on the forefront of veteran-hiring and retention initiatives.

Through their service to country, veterans have acquired skills and abilities prized in any workplace. As one of the nation’s largest nonprofit veterans service organizations, DAV (Disabled American Veterans) works to ensure veterans, including those with disabilities, can find meaningful employment.

Employers can count on DAV for resources and best practices to hire veterans, career fairs and more. Join the many employers stepping up to repay some part of our veterans’ sacrifice. And join us in supporting more Victories for Veterans®

THE VETERAN ADVANTAGE: DAV Guide to Hiring & Retaining Veterans with Disabilities provides a wealth of information to reduce barriers to hiring and promote job satisfaction, productivity and retention. It’s the perfect roadmap for any veteran-hiring initiative.

Download FREE at DAV.org/veterans/employment-resources
Gene Crayton, Paralyzed Veterans’ First African-American President

Gene Crayton was born on a southern Illinois farm, 15 miles north of where the Ohio and Mississippi rivers meet. The fifth of six kids, Crayton learned early about duty, service and a hard day’s work. His father, a sharecropper, died when he was two years old, and it was up to his mother to keep the farm going and raise the family.

Crayton’s sense of service followed him throughout his early life, and at the young age of 17, during his junior year of high school, Crayton enlisted in the U.S. Navy Reserve. After graduation, he entered active duty, where he attended Hospital Corps School at the U.S. Naval Hospital in San Diego, on his way to becoming a corpsman.

“I had hoped to become a doctor,” says Crayton. “As corpsman, I was constantly helping people and doing things to keep people from getting sick. Those duties constantly fed my desire to help others by doing things to help improve their lives. And in some cases, save their lives.”

Crayton soon reported for a training aboard the U.S.S. Purdy, where he spent his time working in the sick bay. It wasn’t long after the Purdy that the young sailor would be called to serve in Vietnam.

Crayton was assigned to the 26th Marine Regiment to serve as corpsman. Since the Marine Corps has no medical personnel of its own, it has historically forged a tight bond with the Navy.

Typically referred to as “Doc,” a Navy corpsman will train alongside their Marine unit, often doing the same type of tactical training and physical fitness training as the Marines.

Crayton ultimately served during the Tet Offensive, where he saw many tragic injuries and saved numerous lives. His unit was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its extraordinary heroism in action.

“One thing that I don’t think many people talk about, but when I was in Khe Sanh, Vietnam right before the Tet Offensive started, I had never seen a place so beautiful in my life,” Crayton recalls.

“The banana trees and the different colors of the foliage and the birds. And then of course, Tet hit and all of that changed. I think, if you want to talk about anything, the experience was an extension of my learning as far as culture is concerned. Remember, I was a 17-year-old kid when I went to boot camp. I learned about different cultures and learned how to take care of myself.”

After leaving active duty, Crayton moved to St. Louis, where he was assigned to the local Marine Corps Reserve unit. Respiratory therapy was a new field at that time, and Crayton took a job at Deaconess Hospital.

“At the time, there were only 200 registered respiratory therapists in the United States,” says Crayton. “So, people that had training were in demand. When I went to apply they asked me when do you want to start to work?”

Crayton held that job until an automobile accident left him a T-5 paraplegic. He was honorably discharged from the Navy not long after and was left wondering what would come next.

“I was injured when I was 21,” says Crayton. “After going through the post-injury depression and all of that, I adapted the attitude that I can do it. That attitude ultimately gave me my life.”

Crayton spent his first few post-injury years a recluse, desperately trying to regain control of his new life.

“I had no freedom, no independence, I didn’t drive, I wouldn’t go anywhere unless someone took me,” says Crayton. “After the change, I got out, found my own apartment, learned to drive and had a couple of jobs before discovering Paralyzed Veterans of America, which lead me to where I am now.”

Like so many veterans before him, Crayton discovered the resources and camaraderie of Paralyzed Veterans of America (Paralyzed Veterans) and it wasn’t long before he fully inserted himself into the Gateway Chapter. There, he learned about the organization, traveled to Washington, D.C., for legislation testimony and quickly rose in the ranks of the organization, ultimately serving as chapter secretary, president and national director.
Crayton became the first African-American national president during the Paralyzed Veterans’s 63rd Annual Convention in Miami.

It was an opportunity to better the organization and help other people,” says Crayton. “But I don’t think I had a very successful presidency to be honest with you. I look back on it now and believe the things I was trying to accomplish were right, but I just went about it in the wrong way. I tried to be responsive to everybody … no one was too big and no one was too small for my time.”

Crayton wouldn’t change a thing and credits Paralyzed Veterans for helping shape the man he is today.

“Being with the Marines certainly taught me discipline,” says Crayton. “I’m not sure it [military service] affected my life as I am now. I give the credit to Paralyzed Veterans and the positive influence over the man I am now. Paralyzed Veterans taught me many skills on being a better leader, how we lobby for the veterans and their benefits, and I had a chance to see some of the most prestigious events in and around our nation’s capital.”

As we honor Black History Month, Crayton reflects on the men and women who blazed a trail before him and continues to advocate for education and employment, two of his most passionate platforms.

“Growing up, I heard a great deal about Booker T. Washington, who was before my time, but nonetheless was a strong voice of the African-Americans post-slavery,” says Crayton. “Of course, I enjoyed hearing the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, and as time went on I learned about some of the athletes and the contributions that they made, such as Joe Louis, who was known for his contributions to the United Service Organization (USO). I absolutely enjoyed the stories of the Tuskegee Airmen and had the honor of meeting a few of them over the years. They blazed the trail for other African-American pilots.”

Crayton encourages young African-Americans to enlist in the military, but to get a military occupational specialty that will benefit a secure civilian livelihood.

During Black History Month, Crayton has a deep appreciation and respect for the men and women who helped blaze a trail for him. He follows their example by advocating for education and employment for African Americans, which are two of his most passionate platforms.

King once said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” It’s safe to say Crayton has spent his life working on a great answer to King’s question.

Source: Paralyzed Veterans of America

"Paralyzed Veterans taught me many skills on being a better leader, how we lobby for the veterans and their benefits and I had a chance to see some of the most prestigious events in and around our nation’s capital."

—Gene Crayton

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OCTOBER

CCF - Diversity Employment Day
Multiple Events
See Calendar
citycareerfair.com

Coleman Conference on Cognitive Disability & Technology
October 3
Broomfield, CO
colemaninstitute.org

Zero to Three Annual Conference
October 3–5
Denver, CO
zerotothree.org

No Barriers Summit NYC
October 5–6
New York, NY
nobarriersusa.org

Wonder Women Tech National Conference
October 5–6
Long Beach, CA
wonderwomentech.com

WOC STEM Conference
October 11–13
Detroit, MI
intouch.cegmag.com

CLD Annual Conference
October 11–12
Portland, OR
council-for-learning-disabilities.org

NMSDC National Conference
October 14–17
Austin, TX
nmsdconference.com

Ability First - Festival of Fall
October 14
Pasadena, CA
abilityfirst.org

SACNAS National Conference
October 11–13
San Antonio, TX
sacnas.org

30th Anniversary HENAAC Conference
October 17–21
Pasadena, CA
greatmindsinstem.org

SHRM - Diversity & Inclusion Conference & Expo
October 22–24
Atlanta, GA
shrm.org

DEC 24th Annual Conference
October 23–26
Orlando, FL
deconference.org

AHEAD Conference
October 25–27
St. Louis, MO
ahead.org

Abilities Expo
October 26–28
San Mateo, CA
abilities.com

CSAVR Fall 2018 Conference
October 27–31
Long Beach, CA
csavr.org

NOVEMBER

10th Annual HBCU Career Development Marketplace
November 1–3
College Park, MD
hbcucareermarketplace.org

The Arc National Conference
November 8–11
Nashville, TN
thearc.org

ACSA Leadership Summit
November 8–10
San Diego, CA
acsa.org

NSTA Area Conference
Multiple Events
See Calendar
nsta.org

CCF - Diversity Employment Day
November 7
Long Beach, CA
citycareerfair.com

OCA LICON 2018
November 14–16
Columbus, OH
conference.ocali.org

oSTEM 8th Annual Conference
November 15–18
Houston, TX
ostem.org

CSTA California Science Education Conference
November 30–December 2
Pasadena, CA
conference.cascience.org
DECEMBER

TECHEXPO
Multiple Events
See Calendar
techexpousa.com

The Small Business Expo
Multiple Events
See Calendar
thesmallbusinessexpo.com

Military MOJO
December 6–7
Philadelphia, PA
militarymojo.org

JANUARY

CCF - Diversity Employment Day
Multiple Events
See Calendar
citycareerfair.com

Future of Education Technology Conference
January 27–30
Orlando, FL
fetc.org

ATIA Conference
January 30–February 2
Orlando, FL
atia.org

FEBRUARY

CCF - Diversity Employment Day
Multiple Events
See Calendar
citycareerfair.com

MARCH

CCF - Diversity Employment Day
Multiple Events
See Calendar
citycareerfair.com

Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity
March 4–5
Honolulu, HI
pacrim.hawaii.edu

For the complete conference calendar, visit diverseabilitymagazine.com.

Send your conference announcements to partnerships@diversitycomm.net.
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