



For Media Use:
October 5, 2012

Communications Office
News Release

Vocational Rehabilitation • Florida Department of Education
Tallahassee, FL 32301 • (850) 245-3415 • Fax: (850) 245-3362 • www.rehabworks.org

Contact: Rachel Smith
850-245-3415 or
850-727-3149

Local Employers Honored for Hiring People with Disabilities

Davie, FL– Three outstanding employers were honored on Friday, October 5, in Davie for being leaders in the employment of people with disabilities. The event, at Nova Southeastern University, was in celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) honored these local businesses for their commitment to hiring people with disabilities, and for educating other employers about the many positive benefits of doing so. Honorees were:

Chili’s Restaurant

Mainstreet Gourmet Bakery

Macy’s, Broward and Palm Beach counties

VR Director Aleisa McKinlay said, “Given the current economic climate and high unemployment rates, the challenges of anyone finding a job are steep. The fact that these businesses have given people with disabilities a chance to become productive members of society makes them heroes, in our book.”

The businesses honored definitely understand the benefits of a loyal, productive workforce. **John Gerecs**, Owner of Mainstreet Gourmet Bakery, speaks highly of employee **Waldemar Bereznicki**, and says he has the potential to make his mark in the bakery business. “In a few years this guy could be ready to open his own place because he really wants it,” John says. “He’s hardworking and detail-oriented, you just can’t ask for more.”

Waldemar, who emigrated from Poland in 1979, has problems with his legs that sometimes make it difficult for him to get around, but he doesn’t let that stop him from pursuing his dreams. “I love everything about the business,” Waldemar says. “One day I am learning about breads, the next I am making pastries. It’s so interesting because I have so much to learn, and I think I can learn it all here.”

John only made a few accommodations to Waldemar’s schedule to allow him to work at the Mainstreet Gourmet Bakery.

MORE

What many employers don't realize is that most accommodations for persons with disabilities cost less than \$500, with many being free. In addition, help may be available from programs like VR.

Daniel Gizzi, a Former VR customer who has a severe hearing disability and works as a pilot at Ascension Aircraft, shared his story about overcoming obstacles to land his dream job. **Brian Nichols** with the Warriors at Work, Wounded Warrior Project also spoke at the event.

Learning about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities can open new doorways to employment. VR is committed to helping people with disabilities become part of Florida's workforce. Our employer-focused website, **FLJobConnections.com**, allows businesses to search at no charge for employees with disabilities who are ready to go to work, as well as post available jobs. VR has 80 offices across Florida, and last year helped 6,071 Floridians with significant disabilities find or keep jobs. For more information about VR and its services, call (800) 451-4327 or visit **Rehabworks.org**.

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REMINDER FOR MEDIA--When reporting on stories about people with disabilities, remember to use language that puts the person first, rather than the disability. For example, use phrases such as "people with disabilities" (instead of "the disabled") and "person who uses a wheelchair" (rather than "wheelchair bound"); and "people with a mental illness" (rather than "the mentally ill").