



The FORUM

A Newsletter for Illinois Corporate Partners

November 2011

A Chance to Say "Thank You"

Featured employer on DRS Success Web Site

DHS-DRS would like to say thank you to the employers who have partnered with us to hire individuals with exceptional skills and abilities, and open the door to all businesses interested in forming a partnership that leads to success. One such business that has partnered with DRS to provide training opportunities as well as hire DRS customers is the Jacksonville Savings Bank (JSB) in Jacksonville, Illinois.

JSB has been a return customer of DRS since the fall of 1999, when John Eilering, Vice President at JSB, was first contacted by the School-to-Work Program Administrator at the Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) in Jacksonville. ISD was looking for employers in the Jacksonville community who would employ students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in part time, competitive after school work opportunities.

"We knew we had an opportunity to provide useful skills to students learning about the world of work. We decided that having the students sort and prepare cancelled checks for mailing would not only teach work skills like staying on task, alphabetizing and sequencing, but also free up time for our staff to perform other needed work duties. In that way we help each other" said Eilering.

Through this partnership, Mr. Eilering knows that ISD applicants will already have requisite skills such as strong math and communication skills, a good work ethic and knowledge of appropriate work behaviors including arriving to work timely and dressing appropriately. These are work skills Mr. Eilering considers "essential parts of the job".

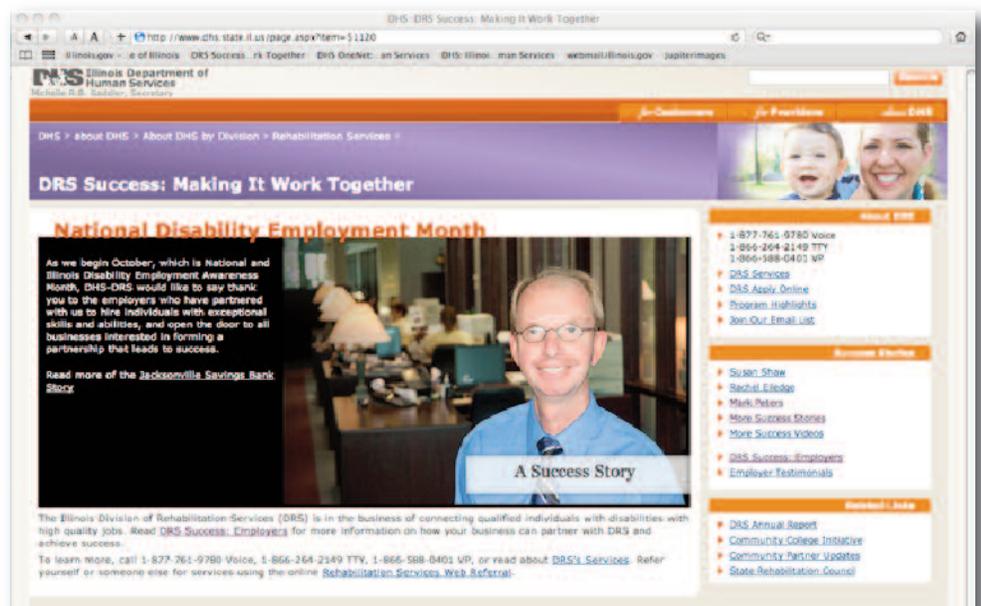
John also talks about how hiring individuals with disabilities has had a positive overall effect on the workplace culture at JSB. "Not only

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DHS/DRS Mission

The Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is the state's lead agency serving individuals with disabilities. DRS works in partnership with people with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education and independent living opportunities.

Below is a picture of the DRS Success website featuring National Disability Employment Month and the Jacksonville Savings Bank in Jacksonville Illinois. For more information on how your business can partner with DRS and achieve success please join us on-line at www.drs.illinois.gov/success <<http://www.drs.illinois.gov/success>> .



Illinois Corporate Partners Mission Statement

The mission of DRS' Illinois Corporate Partner initiative is to create a strong partnership between the Illinois business community and DRS to assist Illinois residents with disabilities at the local level in attaining stable employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

Illinois Corporate Partners will:

- Lead the way in providing job opportunities in the marketplace for persons with disabilities.
- Invest in the untapped and unused labor resources provided by DRS.
- Re-invest in the community by providing an opportunity for Illinois residents to become productive and responsible taxpayers.
- Receive the benefits of qualified employees while providing career opportunities to those individuals with work abilities.
- Give serious consideration to hiring qualified persons with disabilities and encourage other businesses to tap into this pool of talented employees.

Message from the Director

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Kris Smith and I was recently named to the post of Acting Director for the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Rehabilitation Services.

I want to assure the employers of Illinois and our customers, residents in Illinois with disabilities that I have made it my personal goal to increase our efforts in helping our customers to obtain meaningful employment. In Fiscal Year 2011, the Division of Rehabilitation Services assisted 4652 customers obtain employment. That number was down slightly from FY 10.

Our goal for 2012 is 6,000 placements/closures. While this number may seem to be a large increase, I feel that we owe our customers no less than our best efforts in serving them. We can not do this alone. This effort will require the assistance of employers as well as other community stake holders.

The Illinois Corporate Partners have played a major role in our efforts on behalf of our customers. We are looking to increasing and re-energizing our relationships with Illinois employers in order to make 6,000 closures a reality. As Acting Director, I can guarantee you that we will be available at any time to assist with our partnerships.

I look forward to this challenge and look forward to meeting as many Illinois employers as possible in the near future. We are here to serve and make dreams happen. With your help we will get there.

Kris Smith



Kristine Smith
Acting Director
Illinois Department of
Human Services' Division of
Rehabilitation Services



John Eilering, Vice President at Jacksonville Savings Bank.

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have staff been accepting and worked closely with the students, but also our customers with disabilities. It's undoubtedly changed the way we provide service," said Eilering. John stated that some staff have even stayed after work to learn conversational sign language in order to better communicate with the students.

John believes that partnering with DRS and the School-to-Work Program is a "win-win for both the bank and the students". He says that all businesses have certain needs to fill and to consider working with DRS when looking to hire. "The workers we've had want to work, they want to be here. We get a well trained employee that provides us with needed work production and the student learns work skills and life opportunities that build their confidence to be successful. That makes a difference in how we do business and how our customers see us," Eilering added.

Events

Southern Illinois Job Fair

The Harrisburg DRS office hosted "Job Fair 2011" on Tuesday, October 18th at the Southeastern Illinois College Foundation Center, in Harrisburg, Illinois. The event drew 25 local employers and more than 125 job seekers.

Participants were given information about DRS services, job search information, and advice on how to apply and secure an interview.



In memory of Carl Larson who passed away on October 7, 2011. Carl was an Employment Resource Specialist in Chicago/Region 1 and will be greatly missed.

Disability Mentoring Luncheon

The Olive Garden Restaurant in Champaign sponsored a Disability Mentoring luncheon at the Champaign DRS Office for customers and staff on Wednesday, October 19th.

Jason Hodges, General Manager of Olive Garden, spoke about job openings, qualifications they seek in a candidate and how to apply for employment. The information he shared was very valuable and informative. We

thank Olive Garden (Darden Restaurants) for sponsoring the event, providing us with information about Olive Garden and allowing us to share about DRS services.



Rockford Disability Mentoring Day

This year Rockford VR teamed up with the Disability Action Coalition and Rock Valley College to present activities for Disability Mentoring Day on Thursday, October 20th. The morning started with 11 community employers and 13 customers getting together for a speed interviewing event.



The afternoon began with the arrival of approximately 150 additional students and school personnel and a delicious lunch provided by The Olive Garden and Red Lobster Restaurants. The students were then divided into two groups where they experienced interactive mini workshops on topics including how to ask for an application, how to complete an application, how to connect to adult services, how and when to disclose your disability and a skit on the do's and don't's of interviewing.

This experience was made possible by the collaboration of Rockford VR, Rock Valley College, Illinois Growth Enterprises, Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois, Center for Sight and Hearing, DisabilityWorks, RAMP, and the Northwestern Illinois Association.

DRS Employment Resource Specialists

Tom Lowery
ICP Program Director
Rock Island –
West Central Illinois
309-798-6844 (voice)
888-340-1004 (Nextalk)

Phyllis Laycock
Chicago North/West
773-292-4400 (voice)
888-261-4400 (Nextalk)

Rose Parker
Chicago South Suburbs
708-857-2350 (voice)
888-261-2835 (Nextalk)

Marcus Deamer
Benton – Southern Illinois
618-439-4334 (voice)
888-261-2838 (Nextalk)

Rochelle Fowler
Jacksonville –
SW Central Illinois
217-204-2422 (voice)
888-261-8519 (Nextalk)

Stephanie Lipe
Peoria – Central Illinois
309-686-6011 (voice)
888-261-7918 (Nextalk)

Mark Augustine
East St. Louis –
South East Illinois
618-583-2560 (voice)
888-440-8990 (Nextalk)

Illinois Corporate Partners

Abbott Labs
ADDUS Health Care
Archer Daniels Midland (ADM)
American Vending Sales
Aramark
Centegra Health Systems
City of Aurora
City of Naperville
City of Woodstock
Comcast Cable
Compass Euresit
CVS
De Kalb School Dist 428
Eli's Cheesecake
Elmhurst College
FedEx
Federal Signal
Frito Lay
Governor's State University
Great Lakes ADA
Harris Bank
Heritage Enterprises
Hilton O'Hare
Hollywood Casino
Illinois Tool Works
Integrays
Jewel-Osco
Kane County D.E.E.
Kohl's
Lowe's
Monarch Landing
Mc Donald's
Mc Henry County
Meijer
National City Bank
National Louis University
Office Max
Palmer House Hotel
Rockford YWCA
Rock Island Arsenal
Small Newspaper Group
State Farm
Target
UIC
UPS
US Army Corps of Engineers
US Dept. of Transportation
Vonachen Services, Inc.
Walgreen's
Wal*Mart Distribution Center
Wal*Mart- Stores
Waste Management of Illinois

Accommodations Are Low Cost And High Impact!

By Dr. Beth Loy, Principal Consultant, and Anne Hirsh, Co-Director,
Job Accommodation Network

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. Working toward practical solutions that benefit both employers and employees, JAN helps people with disabilities enhance their employability and shows employers how to capitalize on the value and talent that people with disabilities add to the workplace.

Recently, JAN's "Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact Fact Sheet" was updated. This fact sheet provides research findings from a study conducted by JAN, in partnership with the University of Iowa's Law, Health Policy and Disability Center and the West Virginia University School of Applied Social Sciences, on the costs and benefits of job accommodations for people with disabilities. The study results consistently showed that the benefits employers receive from making workplace accommodations far outweigh the low cost of those accommodations.

You may notice that JAN uses the term "typical" cost of accommodation. Typical cost refers to the median or the middle number in the cost data set and is often used when outliers (e.g., extreme costs) exist in a data set. Because of outliers reported by a few employers in the JAN study, the median was a good representation of what employers reported as the cost of the accommodation. The employers in the study reported that a high percentage (56 percent) of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make, while the rest typically cost only \$600.

Employers also reported that providing accommodations resulted in great benefits to their company or organization. The most frequently mentioned direct benefits were: (1) the accommodation allowed the company to retain a qualified employee, (2) the accommodation increased the worker's productivity, and (3) the accommodation eliminated the costs of training a new employee.

The most widely mentioned indirect benefits employers received were: (1) the accommodation ultimately improved interactions with co-workers, (2) the accommodation increased overall company morale, and (3) the accommodation increased overall company productivity.

Employers also reported that accommodations are effective. Of those responding, 76 percent reported the accommodations were either very effective or extremely effective.

Workplace accommodations are low cost and high impact, and JAN can help employers make them, free of charge.

For more information about effective job accommodation options, see JAN's "A to Z of Disabilities".

For more information, visit <http://AskJAN.org/> or call 800-526-7234 (Voice), 877-781-9403 (TTY).

The Forum is a bi-monthly publication for the Illinois Corporate Partners. We welcome any news or suggestions for the newsletter. We also welcome photos in tif or jpg format. For more information contact Tom Lowery at: 309-798-6844 (V) 888-340-1004 (TTY) or email at tom.lowery@illinois.gov

Programs, activities and employment opportunities in the Illinois Department of Human Services are open and accessible to any individual or group without regard to age, sex, race, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion. The department is an equal opportunity employer and practices affirmative action and reasonable accommodation programs.