

Best Buy, others look to Careers Industries for diverse talent

JOE GREENE
Executive director

“Good help is hard to find so limiting the resources you use to find quality applicants isn’t in the best interest of most organizations,” advises Best Buy General Manager Brian Odeja. “I believe if you don’t have a relationship with an organization that can help you with your diversity than you are missing out on some great applicants.”

That’s why Brian and the Best Buy store at 2710 S. Green Bay Road, Mount Pleasant, have worked with Careers Industries’ Partners in Employment Program for more than two years. PIE, in partnership with the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, connects employers with pre-screened, qualified applicants who also happen to have disabilities.

“Whether or not they have a disability isn’t a factor as long they have a passion for technology and are interested in providing top notch customer service,” explains Odeja. “We try to look for employees specifically who like to have fun, enjoy technology and can help customers use technology



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to improve lives. As somebody in charge of hiring locally, we always do what we can to make sure we get an accurate applicant flow. PIE only brings applicants to me who have a passion for the job, and the qualifications and skill set to be successful here.”

One of those individuals was 32-year-old William, a dean’s list student at Gateway Technical College studying information technology. First, PIE arranged for a paid work experience (or internship) for Best Buy’s Geek Squad customer tech support team. The internship was funded by DVR. Then, in February, William was hired as an official employee.

“William is someone who was given an opportunity to show that he is a qualified candidate and now is a good employee for Best Buy. He fits in very well not only

with Geek Squad, but also across the entire store. People know and respect him,” says Odeja. “He has a very good work ethic. He takes initiative. He loves to learn. He has had a positive impact on the employee and customer experience.”

So much so that William received a Best Buy “Geek Squad Precinct Award” for providing outstanding client service.

Diversity goes beyond race and ethnicity

Inclusion is inherent in the name of Kenosha-based childcare center Every Child’s Place. The nonprofit organization’s vision centers on providing an environment for children that supports and embraces their individual differences, immersing them in an inclusive setting.

“We want children of all abilities to be able to feel good, happy and positive and have a chance to do what they love most,” explains Executive Director Ginny Brydges. “It’s about showing them how to embrace the possibilities and inspiring their dreams.”

To demonstrate that those possibilities include future employment opportunities, a diverse

workforce is a priority for Every Child’s Place.

“Having a diverse staff doesn’t just include race and ethnicity. It’s the abilities of each person including adults with special needs,” says Brydges. “These individuals are by far some of the most reliable employees we’ve ever hired. They are very task oriented. They know what they need to do and they want to get it done.”

For 19-year-old classroom assistant Taylor, that includes helping children get ready for nap time and mentoring them at lunch demonstrating proper table manners. Taylor completed an internship with Every Child’s Place before she was hired last November. The internship and job opportunity was made possible through Careers Industries PIE program and DVR, along with Taylor’s high school which provided school credits for her work experience.

To learn more about how you can expand your organization’s base of qualified applicants, as well as receive tax credits and other free assistance, please call Careers Industries at (262) 752-4200 or visit www.careersindustries.org.