

Businesses find quality employees through Careers Industries program

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Careers Industries executive director

Dave Koenig, owner and operator of the Piggly Wiggly grocery, 3900 Erie St., doesn't post help wanted signs or purchase ads to find store associates. Instead, he always accepts applications from interested candidates. Two such associates who Dave hired this past year were Andy, 20, and Michael, 46, both participants in Careers Industries' Partners in Employment program.

PIE partners with the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to match savvy, progressive employers like Koenig who understand the value of a diverse workforce with people with disabilities who have the requested skills and talents.

"We don't view Andy and Michael any differently than any other associate. They are part of our team and treated the same as everybody else," Koenig explained. "We didn't hire them for a pat on the back. These are two good individuals who are fulfilling a role we needed to fill and we look forward to having them for a long time."

Koenig considers his store lucky to find such valuable employees.

"For some people grocery is not a glamorous job but Andy and Michael show quite a bit of pride in what they do. They enjoy coming to work every day and have self-satisfaction in what they are doing."

Such outcomes don't surprise Patricia Johnson, director of DVR for Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties.

"The DVR/Careers Industries talent pool provides businesses with a great opportunity to connect to qualified candidates



Paddock Lake Subway owner Robyn Sarbacker, left, has an employee team that includes Steven, middle, a Careers Industries Partners in Employment participant.

who have been prescreened and typically have been through substantial training. Businesses also benefit from having a professional relationship with a disability expert if questions come up so there is ongoing support and consultation."

Both Andy and Michael first went through paid internships at Piggly Wiggly funded by DVR with on-site job coaching provided by Careers Industries.

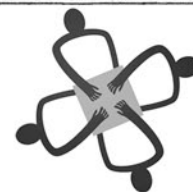
"The coaching was outstanding and a blessing," Koenig said. "As store owner and operator, my time is spread very thin. The coaching allowed us to focus on the other aspects of our business

while the coaches helped develop the interns into employees we could bring on staff."

Like Koenig, Subway restaurant owner Robyn Sarbacker also found more time to focus on her Paddock Lake franchise thanks to a Careers Industries coach who supported her intern, 25-year-old Steven.

"Our coach was always around. She would stand by Steven's side making sure he was doing things correctly so it wasn't a matter of me taking time away from my duties to get him trained," Sarbacker explained.

Steven was eventually hired and works two mornings a



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week doing food prep including weighing sandwich meat, putting breads in bins and other tasks — meaningful work that until Steven handled, Robin or other employees had to do.

"I've always been somebody who tried to do things myself. This has opened my eyes to let other people do things so I can get more managerial tasks done," Sarbacker said. She noted that she quickly realized, "Steven can do it. He doesn't need me to stand by his side. He can do it by himself. I thought it would be extra work for me but it definitely is not."

The franchise owner advises other business owners to connect with organizations like Careers Industries and DVR.

"Expand your mind, open your heart and give them a chance because it really could be a great thing for yourself and your business."

DVR's Johnson adds there are other benefits for businesses that recruit employees through Careers Industries and DVR, like tax credit opportunities. Contact Careers Industries at (262) 752-4100 to learn more.