



Business Partnership Network NEWS

Volume 2, Number 4

Fall 2006

The Vocational Rehabilitation Business Partnership Network's mission is to provide leadership in disability employment awareness.

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- Miss Scarlett's Pet Bakery

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Workshop reduces anxieties about people with disabilities

So, what is the best way to interview a person in a wheelchair? Or someone who is hard of hearing?

Those questions became a lot less daunting to about 30 people from South Carolina industries who attended a workshop on "CAPability Awareness Training: Increasing Our Comfort Level."

The workshop, presented by the S.C. Vocational Rehabilitation Business Partnership Network, was held Oct. 24 at the BlueCross and BlueShield's Columbia headquarters.

Its goal was to remove the stigma that surrounds people with disabilities in the workplace by portraying them as ordinary people who just need to be approached a little differently.

For instance, don't remain standing if you're interviewing someone in a wheelchair. And don't stand behind the person so he has to twist around to talk with you.

As for the applicant who is hard of hearing, speak clearly, look directly at the person and don't cover your mouth when you talk. And there's no need to yell.

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Gayle Wigfall of BlueCross Blue Shield sees the world from a different perspective as she rides in a wheelchair escorted by Andrea Hemingway, also of Blue Cross.



Brenda Williams, right, of SCVRD covers her mouth as she demonstrates how not to talk to Marlise Guillerault, a fellow SCVRD employee who also is hard of hearing.

In their own words

Spinx Co. looks at ability beyond disability

By PAM MORRIS
The Spinx Company

Scotty was born and raised in Spartanburg, attended school at Broome High School leading a normal life. He finished High school and continued his education at Spartanburg Technical College. His dream was to complete his degree in Marketing and Management.

During his schooling, he began having difficulty standing and walking. In 1998 Scotty was diagnosed with gout, a form of arthritis that severely affects

the knees, ankles and feet. He was prescribed several different medications but nothing seemed to relieve the pain.

He left college realizing that financial obligations had surpassed his limitations and college hopes and attempted to secure a place in the business world. Scotty was unable to stand for any length of time and had a noticeable limp. Employers turned him away time and time again.



Lowe

Now married, Scotty and his wife Dawn continued to struggle financially. For two years, Scotty continued to seek employment with no success. Scotty did manage to hold several jobs over the next few years, however his limitations and medical issues continued to negatively affect his career opportunities.

In 2006, he was referred to Vocational Rehabilitation in Spartanburg. Scotty met with counselor Norma Grizzard and thought that he would be in their program for a long time. Norma realized his potential and arranged a

meeting with The Spinx Company to discuss employment opportunities.

Raymond Hargrave met with Scotty and scheduled a job tryout the following week. Scotty worked hard and was offered a full-time sales associate position at store #160 in Spartanburg. He attended Spinx orientation on July 11.

Over the next several months Scotty amazed everyone with his performance and worked very closely with the store Manager Jerry Blosser. On Oct. 17, Scotty was promoted to assistant manager.

He will be attending the Assistant Managers' Training Program class in November and has his eyes on managing his own store within the next year.

Scotty is an asset to The Spinx Company and we look forward to his continued development.

Partnerships with agencies through the communities are the best way to gain best employees. People with disabilities have proven and will continue to prove their abilities within The Spinx Company.

The Spinx Co. operates more than 78 convenience stores and supplies another 25 with gasoline in North and South Carolina.

Members, cont'd

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Workshop

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Sensitivity is the key as well as putting the person before the disability.

The workshop also included sessions on the kinds of assistive technology available to accommodate employees with disabilities, an overview of the S.C. Vocational Rehabilitation Department's two residential substance abuse

training centers, and a presentation on SCVRD's Job Retention Services, designed to help people maintain their jobs while they get help for a disability that might be jeopardizing their employment.

Employers represented included Bose Corp., the University of South Carolina, BlueCross Blue Shield, Washington Savannah River Corp., Lowe's, Home Builders Institute, and DeRoyal Textiles.