

# Investing in America



**2017 - 2018**

*[www.rehabnetwork.org](http://www.rehabnetwork.org)*



# Success Stories

## Terry

Terry J. Robinson graduated from Paragould High School in May of 1999. During his studies at PHS he was in the ROTC program. Immediately upon graduation he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. His basic training took place at the Marine Corps Depot in San Diego, CA.

He was assigned to serve in Jordan where he spent several months in field operations. It was during this time period that he received a severe mobility injury and returned to the U.S. for surgery. After surgical repairs and recovery, he continued his duties until his obligated Marine Corp time was complete.

After leaving the Marine Corps he was assisted by the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation program and the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Both VR agencies helped him with achieving an automotive degree with various professional certifications from Ozarka College in Melbourne, AR. In addition to working with the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation program for assistance in obtaining college certification; Arkansas Rehabilitation Services provided counseling, job placement services, and maintenance for client's full achievement of his vocational goal.

Terry Robinson now professionally works for Robinson Construction Company as a mechanical specialist.







*Austin, at front left, works at his computer on the installation of a labeling machine.*

## Austin

Austin McQuade graduated first in his class from the Wilson Rehabilitation Workforce Center (WWRC), receiving a Manufacturing Specialist and Manufacturing Technician I certificate in December of 2016. He received services from Virginia Vocational Rehabilitation and WWRC, including guidance, counseling and an assistive technology consultation through the Virginia Career Pathways program.

Austin is from Chesterfield, VA, and chose to return to seek employment in the Richmond area after graduation. He was hired by the CDA France Corporation and is being trained as a company field service technician. He will have responsibility for installing and servicing the company's broad range of labeling machines that are sold across the United States.



## Aaron

Aaron Kully acquired a spinal cord injury in a diving accident at age 20. With the help of Nebraska VR, he went on to receive a Bachelor's degree and work as a Quality Review Specialist/ Administration Consultant at Principal® in Grand Island, Nebraska.

The job allowed him to earn enough to discontinue Social Security Disability Insurance benefits in early 2009. Now 37, he was contacted by a Nebraska VR Career Pathways Recruiter (CRP) to

discuss opportunities to continue his education and advance his career.

With career counseling and exploration help from the CRP, Aaron landed on a goal to obtain a Master's degree in Management Information Systems.

This goal allows him to advance in his career and earning potential. He credits Nebraska VR and the Career Pathways Advancement Project

for changing his life through access to this opportunity. Going forward he has plans to purchase a home of his own.



*Aaron is working toward his Master's degree in Management Information Systems.*

# Success Stories



# VISION 2020

Leading change. Today. Tomorrow. Together.



## Business Partnerships



### Microsoft – *NET Business of the Year*

At Microsoft, our mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. This includes the over 1 billion people across the globe with disabilities. For our customers with disabilities we offer accessible products like Windows 10 and Office 365, intended to make authoring and consuming content a more productive experience. Specialized customer support is available through the Disability Answer Desk, and includes support for customers who communicate in American Sign Language. We enthusiastically welcome the feedback of our customers with disabilities and their allies. Customer input is critical to our goals of continued improvement in the accessibility and usability of our products, and to our disability inclusion efforts.

Through our commitment to diversity and inclusion, we strive to create an environment that supports our employees with disabilities in contributing their best ideas. We have found that sharing examples of our commitment to people with disabilities helps enhance our ability to recruit and retain employees, push our industry on innovation and issues related to accessibility, and better address the needs of our customers living with a disability.

Microsoft is committed to hiring diverse talent into the company and candidates with disabilities are an integral part of this commitment to diversity and inclusion. We recently added a dedicated Disability Hiring website to recruit people with disabilities that highlights related jobs at Microsoft, explains the Microsoft approach to disability inclusion: disability is a strength!

The Microsoft Autism Hiring program is an example of our targeted efforts to increase disability employment at Microsoft and beyond. The program consists of a comprehensive one-week interview academy, selection process, and subsequent guided onboarding program for both the new hire and his or her new manager. We have hired 29 full time employees as part of our Autism Hiring program and we continue to share our learnings with other employers as they begin their own disability inclusion hiring programs. Our strong partnership with PROVAIL and the NET/VR has been key to this program's success.

The Microsoft Supported Employment program is another example of our efforts in disability employment. The Microsoft Real Estate and Facilities team works closely with our vendors on a programmatic approach to hiring and supporting people with developmental disabilities in the work environment. Microsoft Supported Employment program in the Seattle-area has contributed to the employment of over 200 people with only 1% attrition.

Beyond the Microsoft workforce, our ultimate goal is to reduce the overall unemployment rate for people with disabilities.

**But, these aspirations require partnership with community organizations, private sector employers, public sector agencies, and the disability community. Together, we can re-invent the future of disability employment!**

### *The Hershey Company*

The partnership between the Pennsylvania VR agency and the Hershey Company is a shining example of a successful supported employment model. Headquartered in Hershey, PA., the company worked with VR at the Y&S Candies plant in Lancaster County. The company's Abilities First in Manufacturing program (originally named the H.E.R.O.E.S Program) was launched in 2012 as part of Hershey's continuing commitment to diversity and inclusion. The company has successfully partnered with local and state non-profits and government agencies in the locations where Hershey does business.



These partnerships create support networks with a single point of contact for each plant. The VR business specialist from Lancaster served as the single-point-of-contact with the company, helping to coordinate job coaching support and training, as appropriate. This model has served as the basis for efforts at other facilities which has resulted in a continued increase in diverse representation at the plants. VR has supported the replication of the Hershey model in Virginia, Kentucky and Illinois. The Hershey Company's diversity commitment is reflected in it being one of just 27 recipients of the first-ever National Organization on Disability's, Leading Disability Employer Seal.



**PROVAIL –**  
*NET Partner of the Year*





# ***Minnesota's Approach to WIOA***

Minnesota's partnerships with Independent Living Centers to implement Section 511 of WIOA shows significant potential for success and has already resulted in identifying over 700 individuals in subminimum wage jobs who are interested in pursuing competitive integrated employment in the community.

Minnesota has more individuals with significant disabilities employed in subminimum wage jobs than most other states. The best estimate is that in 2016 at least 100 entities holding a special 14(c) wage certificate employed nearly 16,000 people in center-based and segregated subminimum wage jobs.

Section 511 of WIOA encourages individuals with disabilities to work in competitive, integrated employment in the community and charges State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies with the responsibility of providing this opportunity. Because of the size of the population that needed to be served in Minnesota, and

recognizing the impracticality of reassigning VR staff to implement Section 511, Minnesota entered into a unique partnership with the state's eight regional Centers for independent living (CILs) to provide these services.

Minnesota's VR program provided more than \$1 million per year in contracts with the IL centers to hire staff to provide the outreach services to individuals currently working in subminimum wage jobs. Protocols and documentation forms for the outreach were developed and published and the outreach began in late 2016 when the newly hired IL staff began contacting 14(c) certificate holders to identify people who were currently working for less than the federal minimum wage. By the end of January CIL staff had made initial contact with 3,371 people across the state that

were working subminimum wage jobs. Of these, 723 people, or a little more than 20 percent, answered "yes" when asked if they were interested in pursuing competitive, integrated employment. For the people who answered "yes" the next step in the process is to facilitate a meeting with the individual and his or her support team (family, guardian, county case manager, the 14(c) employer, and others) to develop a plan that has the potential to lead to competitive, integrated employment.



***Joshua Ista is one of several Minnesotans who have moved from a facility based job into competitive integrated employment.***

## ***Alaska's JOBZ Club***

Alaska's youth in transition JOBZ Club initiative has served 150 students with disabilities statewide through transition camps since implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Jointly funded by AK

Vocational Rehabilitation, State Department of Education and the local school districts, JOBZ Club leverages the resources of over 60 businesses and post secondary education providers to deliver the pre-employment transition services of job exploration work, readiness training, and work based learning experiences.

In such geographically remote places as Chefnak, a Yup'ik Eskimo village of 450 on the Bering Sea where 73% of the residents are economically disadvantage and there is only a graduation rate of 50%, such collaborative initiatives are bringing

much needed services to students with disabilities. These three to five day camps are conducted in schools and juvenile justice facilities. Post camp surveys showed that employers who shared their personal career paths gave great insight to these students allowing them to learn from those that have successfully navigated the barriers many face.



***Chefnak, AK School***