

Old Navy Celebrates Diversity

Old Navy, an American clothing store chain owned by Gap Inc., is happy to celebrate the diversity of its employees.

According to their website, the company embraces diversity by creating an atmosphere of inclusion and appreciation that values each employee's unique ideas and contributions. This very philosophy has helped Old Navy and Curative Care Network build a strong partnership.

In 2007, the company was recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor with a *New Freedom Initiative Award* for helping to develop a model store for person's with disabilities and for finding creative ways to integrate people with disabilities into the workplace.

Alex, Stuart and Walter are three employees who have been integrated into the Milwaukee area stores. All three employees were placed by Curative Care Network's Vocational Services.

Alex was introduced to the retail store in November of 2009 during a six week work experience at the Brookfield, Wisconsin location with the help of a Curative job coach. His performance was so good that management decided to hire him as a permanent part-time employee after the trial was complete.

"The clearance section is Alex's area of expertise," Joe, the store's Service and Training Manager, said. "He has a system in place that I am not aware of, but what ever it is, it works."

Stuart began working at the Southridge Old Navy at the end of his senior year in high school.

He had been participating in a Supported Employment Assessment with Curative Care Network's Vocational Services. As part of his assessment he performed an eight hour job trial working at the Southridge Old Navy.

During the job trial Stuart was trained on store polices, organizing the sales floor, folding merchandise and how to arrange items by the correct size and color.

After his trial period ended, management informed Curative's Vocational Services staff that Stuart was a good fit and that he should apply at the store permanently. Stuart was hired after applying.

"Stuart adds a great energy to the team," Autum, Store Manager said. "He is very helpful to the customers and I feel that hiring him has given us a great opportunity to expand our customer base."

Walter, who is also an employee of the Old Navy Southridge location, recently completed 120 days of employment at the store.

"Walter enjoys keeping the store clean and takes much pride in his job of cleaning restrooms, polishing mirrors and mopping the store before it opens so it looks nice for all the shoppers," Autum said.

"I am pleased to say that the relationship between Curative, the clients and Old Navy has been a successful job match for all involved," Macey Lyons, Curative's Vocational Services Specialist, said.



Alex coordinating store clothing at Old Navy Brookfield.



Stuart with Southridge's Old Navy Store Manager Autum



Walter makes sure Old Navy Southridge is clean before shoppers arrive.

Frequently Asked Questions On Hiring Persons With Disabilities



Employers considering hiring persons with disabilities may hesitate because of questions and concerns. The following are some frequently asked questions by employers.

How do I prepare managers and employees for an inclusive workforce?

Curative can work one-on-one with employees as well as with managers in relationship building. Curative has many available resources for businesses that are interested in creating an “inclusive” environment for their employees. These resources include how to interact with your new co-worker, how to become a disability friendly work place and information about “person first” language.

What performance standards should I have for my employees with disabilities?

All employees should meet your standards. If you have an employee referred by Curative who is not performing up to standard, Curative’s Vocational Services staff can assist the employee with additional training. If needed Curative can also assist in finding an employee that better fits your needs.

Can I terminate an employee with a disability who is not doing his/her job?

Yes. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that as long as an individual with a disability has been provided with an accommodation, if requested, that individual can be treated the same as other employees when evaluating performance. This includes disciplinary actions for those not performing up to job standards. Curative is there to advocate for employers if assistance is ever needed.

Do I need to provide anything special for employees with disabilities?

Many employees require nothing more than the consideration you may already be providing to other employees. An employer’s primary accommodation would be to offer the individual the essential tools and resources needed to become a productive and successful worker. If an accommodation is needed, Curative can provide assistance in helping you determine the right accommodation that works best for you as well as the employee.

Are there tax incentives for hiring people with disabilities?

Yes. You may be eligible for \$2,400 to \$15,000 in tax credits. These credits are available to help employers cover the cost of accommodations for employees with disabilities and to make the workplaces accessible. All businesses working with Curative clients are eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). Curative can help employers obtain the necessary tax credit forms and answer questions.

For questions or to receive more information on hiring persons with disabilities, please contact Vocational Services Manager Beth Lohmann at 414-479-9266.

Sources - www.earnworks.com and Curative Care Network

For the convenience of current and prospective Employer Partners, Curative’s Vocational Services plans to provide periodic email updates regarding hiring and retention practices. You may unsubscribe from these email communications at any time. To be added to the email list, contact Beth Lohmann at blohmann@Curative.org.