

## The Sky's the Limit for Katelyn Rekoske

Ambition, a positive spirit and a magnetic personality are just a few of the qualities that have contributed to Katelyn Rekoske's success.

Katelyn, who has been diagnosed with a developmental delay, joined Curative's Community Employment Program in August of 2006. Her first job assignment was at the Pick N' Save grocery store in Germantown, WI. A Curative Job Coach worked with Katelyn at the grocery store to provide her with the proper training and guidance.

After training was complete and her supervisor was confident in her job performance, Katelyn began to work independently. Katelyn is still employed at Pick N' Save, where she performs a variety of job duties including working at a check-out lane and stocking store shelves.

In addition to working at the grocery store, Katelyn is employed at the Aurora Pharmacy located in Richfield, WI. Katelyn's job duties include keeping the greeting card selection clean, neat, and organized.

"It really takes a load off of me," said the store's merchandiser, Donna Sansone. "Keeping cards in the right place with the right envelopes is a big job, and it's nice to have someone take care of it as well as Katelyn does."



*Katelyn organizing cards at Aurora Pharmacy.*

Katelyn also keeps the pharmacy's coolers full of cold beverages, stocks items throughout the store and assists with the labeling of customer orders for over-the-counter medications.

"When Katelyn wants something she puts her mind to it and achieves it," Beth Lohmann, Curative's Vocational Services Manager said. "She has never let her condition limit her in any way. On the job, she exceeds all expectations. She works hard, enjoys the work she does and in the end gets the job done."

**"Katelyn Rekoske demonstrates that a disability is not an inability, that with hard work, support and a positive attitude, success can be just around the corner."**

**- Beth Lohmann, Curative**

When Katelyn is not working, her hobbies include volunteering, "hanging out" with friends and being involved with her church.

Katelyn also likes to make time for herself to indulge in fun activities such as sketching, drawing and reading celebrity magazines. "I just want to know what's up in their world," said Katelyn of the magazines.

Katelyn is grateful to Curative's Community Employment Program for helping her attain and maintain paid work and thinks that Beth Lohmann is "amazing."

"Katelyn Rekoske demonstrates that a disability is not an inability, that with hard work, support and a positive attitude, success can be just around the corner," Lohmann said.

Perseverance enables Katelyn to have hope and dream big. "I like Martin Luther King because he had a dream," Katelyn said. "My dream is my future."

# Employers Encouraged to Hire Qualified People with Disabilities

In a falling economy where U.S. employers are cutting back on hiring, it is important now more than ever to have highly qualified and reliable employees on your team.

Persons with disabilities often fit the criteria that employers require. Experts who work with disabled persons believe that many employers are reluctant to hire a person with a disability because they are unaware of the variety of skills that person may possess.



Curative's Vocational Services Manager, Beth Lohmann said many individuals with disabilities are well-educated, experienced, and qualified to meet the community's workforce needs.

"They are some of the most loyal, dedicated and committed employees in the workforce," Lohmann said.

According to a 2004 American Community Survey, there are approximately 38 million people in the U.S. who have a disability, meaning that one in every seven people is a potential employee and/or customer.

Research shows that approximately 20.3 million families, or 29% of all families, have at least one member with a disability. This means that one or more persons with a

disability are more likely to do business with a "disability-friendly" company.

"Consumers are attracted to diverse work environments and diverse hiring practices and as a result consumers with or without a disability are most likely to buy from those companies," Lohmann said.

Lohmann, an expert who assists in providing employment opportunities for persons with developmental and/or mental or physical disabilities, offered some tips on why employers are encouraged to hire qualified people with disabilities:

- Businesses receive tax credits by hiring people with disabilities.
- Disabled persons are less likely to resign from their jobs, which reduces training and recruitment cost.
- People with disabilities can enhance diversity initiatives.
- Persons with disabilities display the same or higher performance rates as their non-disabled peers, displaying quality and quantity work, as well as flexibility, attendance and safety.
- Persons with disabilities have a strong work ethic. They can set a good example for other employees.
- People with disabilities and their families have purchasing power.
- Companies that integrate people with disabilities into their work force increase their customer base.
- Many disabilities are acquired later in life through medical conditions or accidents. This population can offer an abundance of education and experience to businesses.

## Curative's Community Employment Program

Curative's Community Employment Program team members have specialized training and experience to help individuals with disabilities find and maintain jobs in the community.

Curative's staff members also work closely with employers to make certain the work environment is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Once employment is achieved, the Community Employment team provides support services to ensure job retention and employer satisfaction.

Curative offers a full range of employment-related services, tailored to meet the needs of both the individual seeking a job and the employer providing work.