

Solid Work Ethic Leads to Community Employment

A willingness to work as a team with others and learn new skills, a pleasant personality and a solid work ethic have contributed to a successful employment history for 45-year-old Brian.

Brian, who was diagnosed at birth with a mild developmental delay, first partnered with Curative Care Network's Vocational Services Department in 1991 so that he could earn a paycheck and work side-by-side with others in the community. Since that time, he has worked at a number of local businesses, including his most recent position at the West Lanes AMF Bowling Center.

In 1991, Brian was hired to work at Curative's Industrial Services Division, which provides hands-on light assembly, packaging and other industrial contract services. Curative's Organizational Employment staff assessed Brian's skills and interests and provided the training he would need to work independently in the community.

"Our Organizational Employment team works with a number of individuals employed at Curative's Industrial Services Division," Beth Lohmann, Vocational Services Manager, said. "We are able to assess how well the individuals work in a team environment, whether they can work independently or need job coaching and teach important job skills."

The ultimate goal is to provide the skills necessary to work competitively in the community, Lohmann said.

Brian's successful participation in the Organizational Employment Program led to his acceptance in 1996 into Curative's Community Employment Program. With assistance from a Curative Placement Specialist, Brian applied for and interviewed for jobs in the community that interested him and for which he was qualified.

He was hired in June 1997 to provide cleaning services and wash dishes at a small restaurant. When the restaurant closed a short time later, Brian and his Placement Specialist began the job search once again. Almost immediately, Brian found employment as a Utility Clerk at a local grocery store.

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- Beth Lohmann

"It is gratifying to know that so many business owners and managers in our community are willing to partner with us and provide employment opportunities for individuals with developmental and/or physical disabilities," Lohmann said. "Our Placement Specialists provide information about important tax credits available to employers as well as any additional paperwork that must be filed with government agencies. We also provide Job Coaches who work closely with disabled workers for as long as they need assistance."

A Curative Job Coach worked at the grocery store with Brian until he and his employer were assured of his ability to work independently as a bagger and cart retriever. Unfortunately, in December of 1997, the grocery chain went out of business and Brian was again looking for employment.



Brian feels "at home" cleaning the West Lanes AMF Bowling Center.

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Ultimate Goal is Independence in Community

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With assistance from Curative, Brian found work at another Milwaukee grocery store in 1998. Before long, Brian was able to work independently at the store with no assistance from Curative employees and so was discharged from the program.

“Discharge from our program is the best possible outcome,” Lohmann said. “Our role is to provide the skills necessary to obtain employment, link our program participants to employers in the community and provide any necessary training once hired. Once both the employee and employer are confident that the job is being done, our services no longer are necessary.”

For the next nine years, Brian had a stable position at the grocery store. In March of 2007, however, Brian contacted Curative with the news that the store where he worked was being closed.

Brian met with Curative Placement Specialist Chris Smith to assess his future employment goals, his qualifications and his personal interests. Brian expressed an interest in gaining new experience, rather than continuing to work in the grocery business.

Smith learned that Brian enjoyed spending his free time bowling and spoke with the manager of the AMF Bowling Center where Brian bowled about job opportunities. The AMF manager was familiar with Brian and suggested he apply for a janitorial position. Brian was hired in October 2007 to provide cleaning services at the bowling center for approximately 25 hours each week.

Smith continues to check in with Brian and his employer to make certain they are satisfied with the arrangement and to offer any necessary assistance. Brian is very pleased with his new responsibilities and said he “feels right at home” working at the bowling center.



Work Opportunity Tax Act Benefits Eligible Employers

Businesses who provide work opportunities to individuals referred by Curative’s Community Employment Program may qualify for tax credits under the Work Opportunity Tax Act.

“The Work Opportunity Tax Act provides a tax incentive to employers who hire individuals in certain target groups identified by the federal government,” Beth Lohmann, Curative’s Vocational Services Manager, said. “This target group includes a majority of those individuals with developmental and/or physical disabilities enrolled in Curative’s Community Employment Program. Our placement specialists can provide information about how to apply to the federal government for these tax credits.”

The Work Opportunity Tax Act provides:

- A 40 percent tax credit on qualified first year wages up to \$6,000 for an employee who is retained 400 hours.
- A 25 percent tax credit on qualified first year wages up to \$6,000 for the employee who is retained at least 120 hours, but less than 400 hours.

The Work Opportunity Tax Act also is extended to qualified veterans, recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), ex-felons and certain individuals living in an Empowerment Zone, Enterprise Community or Renewal Community.

To learn more about the Work Opportunity Tax Act, log onto <http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/>