



..... RUDERMAN .....

# BEST IN BUSINESS

2016 AWARD WINNERS

September 2016



**18 COMPANIES**  
**LEADING THE WAY**  
**IN HIRING AND SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**





## RUDERMAN BEST IN BUSINESS AWARD

# Leading By Example

Our workforce's untapped asset.



Leadership (n) — the action of leading a group of people or an organization.

I would like to sincerely congratulate the 18 winners of the 2016 Ruderman Best in Business award. They have successfully demonstrated that being a socially just company is not mutually exclusive with being a profitable company. In fact, they have demonstrated that the opposite is true.

Right now, unemployment in the U.S. has hit an eight-year low. While businesses across the nation are struggling to attract and retain top qualified candidates in an increasingly competitive market, the mark of our award winners is that they proactively identified a traditionally untapped talent pool. More than 65 percent of people with disabilities are unemployed. In addition to the moral obligation to give such a historically marginalized group a chance, the truly best in business recognize that people with disabilities are incredibly loyal and hard-working employees. The businesses not only get the benefit of their employees' skills, but also strengthen the loyalty of their workforce altogether because people feel more engaged

in working for a socially just company.

Moreover, the skill sets people with disabilities can add to a business can be truly exceptional. For example, the Israel Defense Forces have been hiring people with autism in certain units that require high attention to detail. Businesses have realized that employees who are deaf do better than their hearing counterparts in particularly noisy manufacturing environments that require much concentration. The success of companies lies in finding the right person for the right job and our winners have recognized that preconceived notions about ability can often stand in the way of doing just that. They have recognized that inclusion is not a matter of charity, but a matter of common sense, social justice, and above all, a matter of success.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability, making it the largest minority group in our country. Furthermore, unlike other minority groups, this is one that every one of us can join at any moment. When we consider this scope, and add in the families of people with disabilities, we arrive at a plurality of customers. This is an incredibly large market-share—estimated at over \$200 billion of discretionary spending for people with disabilities alone—and the best businesses are aware of it. Seeing businesses integrating people with disabilities builds respect and customer loyalty throughout the customer base in every community. That is why we are seeing more and more people with disabilities appearing in commercials.

We are also seeing more attention being paid to people with disabilities in political discussions. Our government recognizes the benefits of ensuring equal employment for a fifth

of our population. But we need economic leaders to step up and lead by example. Ultimately, that is what the Best in Business award is about, and our foundation is proud to have partnered with the Jewish Week Media Group to make it happen. I would also like to thank everyone who has nominated a business which excels in the training, supporting, and hiring of people with disabilities.

**These companies have recognized that inclusion is not a matter of charity, but a matter of social justice.**

Most of all, I would like to thank our 18 winners for leading by example. For being models to the rest of the business community and demonstrating the immense benefits of inclusive employment. I have no doubt that others will follow suit thanks to their leadership.

**Jay Ruderman is President of the Ruderman Family Foundation.**

Follow him on Twitter @JayRuderman



Project Directors:  
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 THE JEWISH WEEK MEDIA GROUP

**DVIR ASSOULINE**  
 RUDERMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION

Company Profiles:  
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Design Director:  
**RAN SHACKED**

Art Director:  
**DAN BOCCHINO**

# RUDERMAN BEST IN BUSINESS AWARD

## THE JUDGES

### Elizabeth Taub



Liz Taub serves as the US Business Leaders Network director of business relations and strategic partnerships. Taub received her B.S. and M.S.W. from New York Uni-

versity while directing and guiding the design, development and implementation of a pilot program that runs today at the Center for Special Needs in New York. While working with dedicated, intelligent and productive young adults with disabilities, her interest in the business case for hiring people with disabilities sparked. Upon graduation, Taub started working for Walgreens Co. on their initiative to employ more people with disabilities. She co-created Walgreens REDI (Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative), which expanded nationwide. Taub went on to serve as the executive director of incline, where she focused on educating, supporting and equipping military veterans with the skills to pursue careers in technology. In her position, she works with member companies of the USBLN as a trusted adviser to business to help leverage disability inclusion solutions and policies in the workforce, supply chain and marketplace.

### Thomas (Tad) Asbury

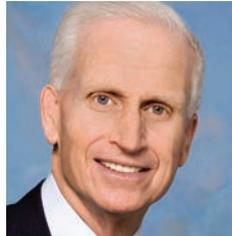


Thomas (Tad) Asbury is vice president & executive director of the Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities, leading Bridges From School to Work, which fos-

ters employment opportunities for young adults with disabilities in major cities across the country. With nearly three decades of experience in the public and private sectors, Asbury leads the Foundation's 70-plus associates, directing all strategy, program, operations, finance and public and private development efforts to ensure long-term organizational stability and growth.

His past professional experience includes senior positions in corporate philanthropy at a telecommunications company, public affairs, public relations and education. Asbury is currently on the boards of the National Youth Employment Coalition and the Disability Funders Network, and he is chair of the Leadership Council of National Youth Transitions Collaborative. An experienced national speaker and presenter, Asbury holds a B.A. from Albion College and an M.S. in applied linguistics from Georgetown University.

### Richard E. (Dick) Marriott



Richard Marriott is chairman of the board of directors of Host Hotels & Resorts, which is among the largest owners of lodging properties in the world. Marriott

also serves as chairman of First Media Corporation, an independent broadcasting firm privately owned by the Marriott family. Marriott joined Host on a full-time basis in 1965 as manager of a Hot Shoppes restaurant, having held part-time positions with the company since his mid-teens. He subsequently served as eastern coordinator of the Roy Rogers division, corporate vice president for the architecture and construction division and vice president of property development for Marriott Hotels. In 1976 Marriott was promoted to group vice president of restaurant operations, and in 1978 he was appointed corporate group vice president, with continuing responsibility for the company's restaurant business as well as its theme parks division. He was elected as a director of the corporation in 1979 and assumed responsibility for its data processing operations in 1983. He subsequently was named an executive vice president in 1984, and vice chairman in 1986.

Marriott is chairman of the boards of trustees of both the J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation and the Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities. A former president of the National Restaurant Association, Marriott serves on the Federal City Council and the National

Advisory Council of Brigham Young University. He was chairman of the board of directors of the Polynesian Cultural Center, was a trustee of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and a member of the Gallaudet University board. He is an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Washington, D.C., area. Marriott graduated from the University of Utah and holds a master's in business administration from Harvard Business School. The younger of the two sons of company founders J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott, Marriott was born in Washington, D.C. He resides with his wife Nancy in Potomac, MD. They have four daughters and 13 grandchildren.

### John Hockenberry



John Hockenberry is host of public radio's live morning news program "The Take-away." An Emmy- and Peabody Award-winning journalist, he is a former correspon-

dent for NBC News, ABC News, and NPR, and has traveled the globe reporting on a wide variety of stories in virtually every medium for more than three decades. He has written dozens of magazine and newspaper articles, a play and two books, including the novel, "A River Out of Eden," and the bestselling memoir "Moving Violations: War Zones, Wheelchairs, and Declarations of Independence," which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Hockenberry wrote and performed the critically acclaimed Off-Broadway show "Spokeman," and has written for The New York Times, The New Yorker, I.D., Wired, The Columbia Journalism Review, Details and The Washington Post. A skilled presenter and moderator, Hockenberry has appeared at numerous design and idea conferences around the nation, including the TED conference, the World Science Festival, the Aspen Design Summit, the Aspen Comedy Festival, and speaks regularly on the media, design and disability. He has served as a distinguished fellow at MIT's Media Lab and is currently a

## The Jewish Leadership Institute on Disabilities and Inclusion,

powered by the Ruderman Family Foundation, is the premier training opportunity for Jewish community service professionals to build the capacity of their organizations to promote real and meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities.

The next Jewish Leadership Institute will be held in Pennsylvania ;

**December 12-15, 2016.**

For information please send an email to [info@nlcdd.org](mailto:info@nlcdd.org).



member of the White House Fellows Commission. He and his wife Alison, also an Emmy and Peabody winner, have five children and live in Brooklyn.

## Jenni Gold



Jenni Gold is considered a triple threat in the world of entertainment. Her editing and screen-writing skills serve as a foundation for her directorial efforts, which have received multiple awards and have placed her among the best in her field as a director member of the Directors Guild of America. Gold is the cofounder of Gold Pictures, Inc., a development/production

entity that was established in 2001.

In addition to recently directing the star filled and award winning film “CinemAbility,” Gold has just directed a comedy feature film, and has co-written and is currently developing various films and TV programing. She also runs the corporate division of Gold Pictures, which services such well-known clients as The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation.

Gold attended film school at the University of Central Florida, where she graduated summa cum laude with two B.A. degrees, one in motion picture production and another in radio and television broadcasting. Gold has Muscular Dystrophy and has used a wheelchair since the age of 7. She often jokes that “since her director’s chair goes 12 miles an hour she is the first to arrive on set.” Her passion for storytelling and entertaining an audience is clearly evident in her work and achievements.

As an advocate for people with disabilities, Gold uses her filmmaking skills and the power of the media to enlighten the public. She recently wrote “The Gold Test” as a standard for Hollywood content creators. “The Gold Test” asks whether a work of fiction prominently features a disabled character whose story is not about their disability, and whose character is not solely defined by their disability.

## Elaine E. Katz



Elaine E. Katz, M.S., C.C.C.-SP, is senior vice president for grants and communications at the Kessler Foundation. She is responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring a comprehensive grant-making program for the Foundation. In addition, she oversees the Foundation’s communication department. Katz has over 25 years of consulting experience and also works with non-

profit organizations in areas of board development, fundraising, marketing and business development. She currently serves on the board of directors of JESPY House as board president, Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), Essex/Newark Disabilities Issues Committee and on the program committee of the Council of NJ Grantmakers. Elaine is also an appointed member of the NJ Veterans and Community Collaborative Network (VCCN). She is the recipient of the Betty Pendler Award for improving the

We congratulate the Ruderman Foundation for their deication and outstanding work in advocating for persons with disabilities and the 18 ‘difference making businesses’ who exemplify values of equality and justice.

As the Genesis Prize Foundation celebrates Itzhak Perlman as our 2016 Prize Laureate, we are proud that resources will be contributed to supporting needs of persons with disabilities as a result of his \$1 million award.

The  
Genesis  
Prize



Matan salutes the innovative work of The Ruderman Family Foundation and the BEST in BUSINESS winners!

**Matan congratulates the 2016 graduates of the Matan Institute for Education and Youth Directors:**

Anshe Chesed Congregation – Congregation Beth Emeth – Congregation Beth Israel - Temple Beth El Congregation Beth Tikvah – Congregation Shaare Emeth – Congregation Sha’are Shalom – Temple Shaari Emeth Jewish Journey Project – Midway Jewish Center – Park Avenue Synagogue – Park Slope Jewish Center Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester – Temple Beth Emeth – Temple Sinai – Union Temple

**It is an honor to have such wonderful partners in creating a truly inclusive Jewish community!**

matan



For every child. For every community.  
The gift of Jewish learning



### HOW WE CHOSE THE WINNERS

For the second year, the Ruderman Family Foundation has partnered with The Jewish Week Media Group on the Ruderman Best in Business Award. We began a nationwide media campaign to solicit nominations of American companies that train, support and hire people with disabilities. Nominations came in from employers, advocates, customers and people with disabilities. Our panel of seven experts in the human resources and disability advocacy field, rated each nomination, according to inclusive hiring philosophies and practices. The top 18 companies are profiled here.



# RUDERMAN BEST IN BUSINESS AWARD

## THE JUDGES

lives of persons with disabilities from Community Options, Inc. Katz holds a certificate of clinical competence in speech pathology from the American-Speech-Hearing Association. She received her master's degree in speech pathology from Adelphi University and bachelor's degree from Boston University in Speech Pathology and Audiology.

### Rich Donovan



Rich Donovan is founder/CEO of The Return on Disability Group and is a globally recognized subject matter expert on the convergence of disability and corporate profitability. He has spent more than 10

years focused on defining and unlocking the economic value of the disability market for large companies and governments globally. Donovan created The Return on Disability concept and model, the first of its kind. The Barclays Return on Disability ETN listed on the New York Stock Exchange on Sept. 11, 2014, under the ticker RODI.

Donovan was appointed to chair of Ontario's Accessibility Standards Advisory Council by the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure in January 2016. He provides corporate and governmental clients with insights and tools to frame disability as a global emerging market. Donovan's proprietary and proven process translates disability success factors into specific actions that create sustainable value. He is sought-after by businesses and governments for advice when acting on the disability market.

Donovan founded Lime (2006), the leading

third-party recruiter in the disability space, where he worked with Google, PepsiCo, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch, IBM, TD Bank and others to help them attract and retain top talent from within the disability market. Identified as a best practice by the U.S. Department of Labor and featured in the Wall Street Journal, Lime does one thing very well — find great talent. Donovan has a combined 20 years of experience in portfolio and investment risk management. As a proprietary trader and portfolio manager at Merrill Lynch, he delivered consistent performance results focused on macro strategies with an event-driven overlay, using equity indices as a primary tool. Donovan holds an M.B.A. from Columbia Business School and a B.B.A. from Schulich School of Business at York University. He is an avid sailor and proud father of his son, Maverick, along with his wife, Jenn. Donovan also happens to have cerebral palsy.

## SINAI Schools applauds our partner schools

*For working with us to create an inclusive community*



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# Uber's Sound Business Sense

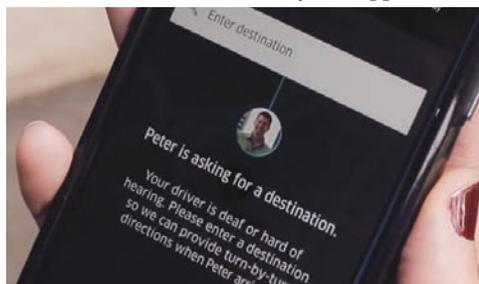
The car service company's technology helps deaf and hard-of-hearing drivers.

While the United States unemployment levels have dropped to below 5 percent, the percentage of people who are deaf or hard of hearing and who are unemployed stands at around 70 percent. Despite many gains in social equality in the deaf community over the last century, the struggle to find meaningful work continues to be an obstacle to living independent lives. In the United States, 400,000 people are deaf and another 20 million people are classified as hard of hearing.

Uber, the app that allows riders to request car service, and which operates in 489 cities around the world, works with 1.1 million drivers as independent contractors, known as partners. Uber drivers use their own vehicles and are rated by their passengers on their service: promptness, cleanliness of vehicle, professionalism, etc. Drivers are able to set their own schedules; many people drive as a part-time way to earn extra income while other drivers are on the road full-time.

Uber has created a number of different technologies to support drivers who are deaf, and to date, 6,000 of them have activated and are driving with a feature in the driver partner app for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. Partners can self-identify as deaf or hard of hearing in the partner app, which unlocks the following features for drivers and riders:

- The driver's app signals a new trip request with a flashing light instead of the usual audio notification, making it easier for partners to notice when there's a new opportunity to give someone a ride.
- The ability to call a deaf or hard-of-hearing partner is turned off for the rider — instead riders are directed to text their driver if they need to communicate with them. Partners who use this setting are less likely to have rides canceled after a failed phone call.
- A message appears letting the rider know that the driver is deaf or hard of hearing.
- Once a partner accepts a ride, riders will be prompted to enter their destination in advance rather than telling the driver and asking them to enter the destination manually. The app can then



The Uber app allows drivers who are deaf to request a rider's destination ahead of time.

provide turn-by-turn directions for the driver.

Not only has Uber been beneficial to the drivers who are deaf — these drivers have boosted Uber's bottom line, providing more rides per month on average than hearing drivers.

Uber has just started a new partnership with the Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD), the largest deaf-led nonprofit in the U.S.

Together, Uber and CSD are working on:

- Creating online Uber video support guides in American Sign Language (ASL).
- Hosting sign-up events across the country to get the word out to the deaf community about the opportunity to drive with Uber.

"I get to meet new and interesting riders all the time and drive around people who have never interacted with the deaf community before," said Alicia Johnson, a Washington, D.C., driv-



Uber

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i

Uber Technologies Inc. is an American multinational online transportation network company headquartered in San Francisco with services in 489 cities worldwide.

u

Uber drivers are all independent contractors who use their own cars and set their own driving schedules. Uber has created new technologies to support drivers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

“

“I'm able to make money in a flexible way so I can pursue my other passions...”

[www.uber.com](http://www.uber.com)

er who has completed more than 1,500 trips with Uber. “Plus, I'm able to make money in a flexible way so I can pursue my other passions, like playing football and coaching softball.”

While it does not yet have statistics on numbers of drivers with other kinds of disabilities, Uber drivers also include people with physical disabilities who are wheelchair users and may drive modified cars. ●



# It Takes A Village, And A Good Muffin

**Café in British Columbia grows out of parents' concerns about their own children's opportunities.**

When young people with developmental disabilities graduate from school, they not only lose the structure of their daily routine but they also lose the ongoing social contact that comes with being in a school community. In the small rural town of Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, four sets of parents worried about the social isolation that their children would face after high school graduation. They also worried about what kinds of businesses would recognize their children's potential for acquiring new skills and give them a chance at a real job.

But instead of getting stuck in their worries, these parents took action. They banded together and envisioned a business that would not only use their children's skills but would also help to integrate them into the community. From their imaginings and early conversations in 2007, COCO Café was born. The café, which opened its doors in 2011, is a co-op model social enterprise, owned by the community.

In the early days of the café, the parents worked together and helped to teach their sons and daughters about the different jobs that are part of running a café, including food prep, dish washing and table service. After two years of operation, with the café steadily increasing its

business, it was clear that they needed someone with a background in the restaurant business to take over. They hired Melanie Cadden, who came with 15 years of restaurant experience to take over as general manager.

Under Cadden's guidance, the café expanded to include a full service catering business that has been used for many weddings and big parties in the area. "The catering part of the business has really allowed us to diversify," Cadden says. "We have employees who really enjoy going to different locations around the area to work events. We have been able to hire more people as a result of the catering that we do. And it's feel-good catering — when people hire us for their wedding, they like that they are supporting our mission."

Each year that COCO Café has been in business it has been able to expand its hiring; it now has 33 employees, 15 of whom have developmental disabilities including Down syndrome, autism and intellectual disabilities. It also has a number of volunteers who like to come in and help with baking, cooking and general help in the café.

In 2015, COCO Café piloted its first training program. It created a three-month opportunity in which people with disabilities could

come in and try out different jobs at the café, with plenty of coaching and support. They had three people in the first training session had three participants and it has been repeated successfully this year. "The training is a great expansion for us," Cadden explains. "More people can learn life skills like cooking and baking and social interactions and see if they like this kind of work." While the café can't hire all of the graduates from the training program, it does help the graduates create resumes and provide references to prospective employers.

Cadden notices how the employees who have worked at the café for several years continue to grow, learn and take on more responsibility by their own initiative. She recalls one young woman, a baker at the café, who was part of



COCO Café



COCO Café is a co-op run café and catering company that employs people with developmental disabilities.



COCO's mission is to operate a successful social enterprise that provides employment, training, and socialization opportunities for people with developmental disabilities within their community.



"It's feel-good catering — when people hire us for their wedding, they like that they are supporting our mission."

[www.cococafe.ca](http://www.cococafe.ca)

the first training group. "The other day I saw her come out front and look at the bakery case and I asked her what she was looking at," Cadden says. "She said she was taking inventory so they would know in the back how many muffins and other pastries to make. We never taught her to do that — she's taken on ownership of her job." ●



# A Partnership For Inclusion

**Drug company's relationship with vocational program for adults is a win-win.**

In every state, when young people with disabilities reach high school graduation, they face a crisis that many in the disability community refer to as “falling off a cliff,” as it marks the abrupt end of most government-funded support services. In Illinois, there is currently a massive shortage in funding to support adults with disabilities, and at age 22 educational entitlements are completely cut off.

Fortunately, an organization called Keshet that serves the Greater Chicago Jewish community has a number of educational, recreational, vocational, residential and social programs for people with disabilities. Keshet has created a program called GADOL — Giving Adults Daily Opportunities for Living — that provides vocational training and places participants in customized employment in which their interests and skills are matched with a company that can use them.

Avi Goldfelder, the chairman of PharMore drugs LLC, a long-term healthcare pharmacy that serves assisted-living facilities in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin, first became connected to Keshet 25 years ago when his friend Charles Frankel, a founding member of the organization, encouraged him to start a young leadership committee. Goldfelder's experience getting to know about Keshet's mission completely altered the way he regarded people with disabilities.

“I used to have a hang-up when I saw a child with special needs. ... I was afraid and didn't understand,” he says. But as he volunteered time and energy serving Keshet, his perspective began to change. “Needs are not ‘special’ ... needs may just be different,” he explained. Goldfelder has not only stayed connected with Keshet, he now serves as its chair of trustees.

However, it was not until seven years ago, when Keshet's executive director Abbie Weisberg approached him about employing GADOL participants at PharMore, that Goldfelder feels he really began to understand the importance of the organization's mission — and realize how his own business, which he owns with three other partners Ari Shabat, Ben Shabat and Sylvia Herlihy — could become an inclusive workplace.

His first employee with disabilities, Avi Lessor, who has Williams syndrome, has worked at PharMore for the last seven years. Lessor's responsibilities include removing labels and sorting the myriad containers of medications returned from nursing homes to PharMore every day. “He's made our work environment much better,” Goldfelder explains. “He's happy. He's funny. He interacts with everyone. And he is very, very qualified.”

Asked what he likes most about working at PharMore, Lessor says, “You get to meet people from all over and I have friends from all different plac-

es.” Goldfelder reports that Lessor not only feels proud of the work that he does, but clearly feels a sense of belonging among his co-workers.

Based on Lessor's success, Goldfelder hired another employee with disabilities, Ethan Fishman, who has Fragile X syndrome. Ethan's mother, Rebecca reflects on what the job has meant to her son: “Ethan feels pride each day as he goes to work on his own and arrives at the PharMore doors where he is greeted with smiles and amazing positive energy. He lights up when he arrives and is even more enthused to do the best work he can each day. The culture in this amazing place is truly special and something all organizations should model.”

PharMore has since hired an employee who has more significant support needs, and who comes to work with a job coach from Keshet.



**PharMore  
Drugs LLC**

BEST IN BUSINESS

i PharMore drugs LLC, a long-term healthcare pharmacy that serves assisted living facilities in Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin.

👤 Working in partnership with Keshet, an agency that serves people with disabilities in the Chicago area, PharMore hires employees who do a variety of essential tasks.

“ “People deserve meaningful jobs and meaningful lives.”

[www.pharmoredrugs.com](http://www.pharmoredrugs.com)

Goldfelder hopes to add more employees with disabilities and to continue his support for Keshet. “Just give them a chance,” he urges fellow business owners. “People deserve meaningful jobs and meaningful lives.”

Weisberg sees the impact of Goldfelder's leadership on creating an inclusive workplace. “Inclusion works from the top down. In a volatile work environment, everyone is looking at the bottom line. A person like Goldfelder looks at how our young adults boost morale and how that positively impacts the bottom line.” ●



# Texas-Size Commitment To Diversity

## Southwest retailer reaping benefits from its hiring philosophy.

In the 26 years since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, public policy and public opinion have shifted to support the integration of people with disabilities into the workforce. Employing people with disabilities has benefits for both the private sector and for the government. For many businesses, people with disabilities make up an untapped talent pool that tends to stay loyal to employers, lowering turnover rates. For the government, increasing work opportunities for people with disabilities can have great cost-saving effects in terms of disability benefits.

H-E-B, a retailer with 370 stores in Texas and Mexico, has recognized the benefits of hiring people with disabilities — and has partnered with an office of the state government to find potential new employees with disabilities.

Working together, they have launched H-E-B's Abilities Workforce Initiative in San Antonio to recruit clients referred by the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), many of whom become H-E-B Partners (H-E-B's name for employees). Professionals at DARS select participants with disabilities to attend a weeklong workshop where they learn soft skills and more about H-E-B. After the week, each individual decides whether or not to continue the

process. The next step is an interview with the hope of being hired. Once hired, job coaching is offered for the transition to the work environment and ongoing support is available. H-E-B hopes to expand the Abilities Workforce Initiative statewide.

For Sonia Quirino Canales, diversity and inclusion manager at H-E-B, the Abilities Workforce Initiative is an incredible advantage for the company. "The diversity of our workforce is one of our biggest assets. It helps us to better understand the needs and preferences of a community while continuously building a culture of inclusion," she says. "With high unemployment rates among individuals with disabilities, having a good job is life changing. Our Partners with disabilities take great pride in having and keeping their job."

Canales recalls meeting Greg Ornelas, an Abilities Workforce Initiative graduate, a few months ago on a video shoot for the program. Ornelas is a customer service assistant who has been working for H-E-B for over a year. He does his job so well, Canales says, that in a short amount of time, he became responsible for training new Partners. "I teach the Partners how to bring in the carts [and] the newer Partners how to bag fast —

how to keep up with a good pace and a good motion," Ornelas explained to her.

Yvonne Maldonado, his unit director, says that the great thing about Ornelas is that he understands his job, he knows what needs to be done, he knows why, and he does it. He is described as being committed, loyal, and punctual — in fact, he comes in early every day, and tries to be the best he can be. When Canales asked Ornelas how he feels about working at H-E-B, he told her, "It feels great! I'm actually surprised that I made it one year. Let's see if I can keep it going for more years to come. I don't know how to put it in words. I'm just really happy to be working here."

H-E-B also recognizes the value of disability awareness education for its entire staff. The

**H-E-B**  
BEST IN BUSINESS

- i** H-E-B operates 370 retail stores located in Texas and Mexico.
- u** H-E-B's Abilities Workforce Initiative aims to provide clients referred by the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) with meaningful employment.
- “** "Let's see if I can keep it going for more years to come. I don't know how to put it in words. I'm just really happy to be working here."  
**”**

[www.heb.com](http://www.heb.com)

company uses a variety of methods to educate its workforce about the diversity of this community. From a long-standing partnership with Special Olympics Texas, to producing videos, hosting Lunch and Learns, celebrating Disability Employment Awareness Month to presenting an Autism Art Exhibit, it has created a culture of inclusion where each and every employee is a valued member of the team. ●



# Making Accommodations

## Biopharmaceutical company paves way for wheelchair-using senior VP.

In January of this year, NextCure, Inc., a newly formed biopharmaceutical company focused on the development of new immuno-oncology products, announced that it had raised \$67 million Series A financing from major investors including Canaan Partners, Lilly Asia Ventures, OrbiMed Advisors, Pfizer Inc., Sofinnova Ventures and Alexandria Ventures. NextCure’s mission is to give Dr. Lieping Chen, a professor of immunobiology, dermatology, and medicine and United Technologies Endowed Professor of Cancer Research at the Yale School of Medicine, a mandate to build on his past body of work to discover treatments.

For Dr. Solomon Langermann, Ph.D., NextCure’s senior vice president of research, the experience of hitting the road to pitch the startup company’s vision to potential investors required extra planning and preparation. Langermann, who is 56, has used a wheelchair for ten years, due to many years of deteriorating muscle strength because of inclusion body myositis (IBM). IBM is an inflammatory muscle disease characterized by slowly progressive weakness and wasting of both distal and proximal muscles, most apparent in the muscles of the arms and legs. While research is being done to understand the causes of IBM, there is currently no treatment to slow the course of the disease, which affects men in higher numbers than women. IBM is considered to be a rare condition, with between three and four people out of every 100,000 people over age 50 having the condition.

For Dr. Langermann, the progressive nature of IBM has lead him from wearing leg braces

and using a cane to walk to using a wheelchair. However, wheelchair use and coping with IBM has not slowed down his impressive scientific career leading up to his work with NextCure. Dr. Langermann, who received his Ph.D. from Tufts University and completed his postdoctoral fellowship as well as a master’s degree at Harvard University, has worked as an adjunct professor in the Department of Medical and Research Technology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Prior to his position with NextCure, he worked in research in other immunology and molecular genetics companies, including serving as vice president of research and development at Amplimmune and in various capacities at MedImmune, Inc.

Coming to NextCure meant not only work in an office settling, but the need to take the startup’s mission out on the road to pitch to potential investors.

“Not only did my colleagues make many accommodations during ‘road show’ travel to raise funds,” Dr. Langermann recalls, “but they also did so in setting up my new office and accommodating a home office for me as well.” Dr. Langermann understands the treatment that he’s received from his colleagues to be in keeping with NextCure’s philosophy of putting together the most qualified research team — and that making accommodations for his mobility issues was never a question. “NextCure hires people based on their abilities, knowledge in the field, and ability to contribute regardless of physical limitations and all accommodations

are made to work with talented and qualified individuals to be successful,” he explains.

During a recent board meeting in New York, where the NextCure research team presented to investors in a beautiful Manhattan skyscraper, NextCure colleagues helped Langermann get settled comfortably before the meeting started. The original founder of the Venture group, whom they were presenting to, was present and came over to personally greet Langermann and congratulate him on the successful launch of the company and the formation of NextCure’s management team. The founder was also a wheelchair user—he



NextCure Inc.



**Short Description of Business:** A newly formed biopharmaceutical company focused on the discovery and development of new immuno-oncology products with Series A financing from a consortium of Venture Capital groups.



NextCure hires people based on their abilities, knowledge in the field and ability to contribute regardless of physical limitations and all accommodations are made to work with talented and qualified individuals to be successful.



“Not only did my colleagues make many accommodations during ‘road show’ travel to raise funds, but they also did so in setting up my new office and accommodating a home office as well.”

[www.nextcure.com](http://www.nextcure.com)

is paraplegic due to a wrestling injury in his youth. “He truly appreciated that perseverance and recognition by others of the abilities (not disabilities) of those with special needs that are essential components of success and integrity in any new venture,” Dr. Langermann explains. “NextCure should be lauded for setting important precedents in this area.” ●



# Brewing Up Opportunity

**For a Midwest restaurant chain, a hiring gamble pays big dividends.**

Scott Wise is celebrating his 20th anniversary as a restaurant owner this year. His professional journey has taken him from opening the first Scotty's Brewhouse in Muncie, Ind., to operating 15 restaurants across the state and also in Ohio, with continued plans for expansion.

While Wise's professional life was certainly a success, he marks a change in his emotional and spiritual life that happened four years ago, in 2012, when he contracted viral encephalitis, a brain infection that took him very close to death. When Wise recovered from his illness, he emerged with a new spiritual and emotional perspective on the meaning of his life. "I decided that God's mission for me on Earth was not just to open restaurants, but to use the platform I was given to do good in our world," he explains. "To inspire. To lead. And, to help others."

Wise and his management team created a two-sided card to share with every employee each day of work. One side states, "I will work hard and make \_\_\_\_\_ proud today." On the other side of the card were lines that Wise modified from Robert Fulghum's classic, "Everything I Need to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten," blended with some of his own uplifting messages: Be kind to others. Clean up after yourself. Lend a hand to those who need it. Make a difference and a mark in our world. Do some kind of philanthropic work every 90 days: Donate your mind, body and soul.

Word spread in the community about the positivity at Wise's restaurants. Staff from the Arc

of Indiana, an organization that for 60 years has been committed to all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities realizing their goals of learning, living, working and fully participating in the community, reached out to Wise with an idea. They asked if Wise would be open to hiring people with intellectual disabilities who had been part of their vocational and job training program. Wise was game, though he wondered how his employees and customers would react.

"I clearly was not giving enough credit to the hearts of others," Wise recalls, when remembering his initial hesitation about hiring people with disabilities. "Because our team members rallied behind our employees with disabilities. They protected them. They shared with them. They helped them. They laughed with them. And, they cried with them." Wise notes that the appreciation of his employees with disabilities extended to his customers as well. "We have an employee at one of our restaurants named Kelly, who has Down Syndrome. This girl has the best smile and personality. Our guests love her so much because she is filled with "hugs" for kids and "high fives" for moms and dads. She showed me last week a \$10 tip she received."

In addition to contributing to a positive culture in his restaurants, hiring people with disabilities has been an excellent business choice for Wise. Normal employee turnover in Scotty's Brewhouse opening saw an early loss/attrition rate of about 35 percent. When Wise would open a new restaurant with 150 people, he would expect to end up with about 85

of those employees staying on after the first month of business. Training new staff is a tremendous expense in terms of time and resources. However, after starting to work with the Arc of Indiana, Wise's attrition rate reduced to 3 percent or about 5 people.

Wise appreciates this enormous financial bonus for his business — but he encourages other companies to pursue inclusive hiring because it is simply the right thing to do.



Scotty's Brewhouse, Thr3e Wise Men Brewing Co., Scotty's Dawghouse and Scotty's Brew Club



Restaurateur Scott Wise owns and operates a number of restaurants in Indiana and Ohio. His mission is to employ people with disabilities, military veterans and other segments of our population that he believes are not being given proper opportunities.



Scotty's Brewhouse hires and supports people with disabilities in all of its restaurants with plans to increase hiring up to 10% of all employees next year.



"There are tears that we see when an employee with a disability is given their first paycheck, or told 'you are hired!' or even given their first uniform..."

[www.scottysbrewhouse.com](http://www.scottysbrewhouse.com)

"There are tears that we see when an employee with a disability is given their first paycheck, or told 'you are hired!' or even given their first uniform. ...You are met with such incredible excitement and smiles. It is so beautiful to see that kind of appreciation from someone — it is a true testament of 'thank you for giving me a chance, I won't let you down.'"

Currently, 3 percent of Wise's total workforce of 1,500 employees is made up of persons with disabilities. He plans to increase this number to 10 percent by the end of 2017. ●



# A Safe Space For Those With Differences

The Safeway supermarket chain is at the leading edge of hiring and support of disability organizations.

Safeway, one of the largest food and drug retailers in North America, with 1,761 stores in the U.S. and Canada, is committed to inclusion and diversity among its employees. The chain has created a number of employee resource and network groups including a Women's Network Group, Hispanic Leadership Network Group, Asian Network Group, Safeway African American Leadership Network Group and GALA (Gay and Lesbian Alliance) to support growth and leadership throughout its stores.

Safeway is also committed to the training and support of people with disabilities through their ITS company. In 2007, the company was honored by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) for the work it is doing in terms of hiring people with disabilities. Accepting that honor, Safeway's chairman, president and CEO, Steve Burd, stated at the ceremony, "We appreciate the recognition and are proud of our longstanding partnership with the vocational rehabilitation agencies, which continue to be a valuable hiring resource. These are among our most productive employees, and we intend to build on this important program as a way of raising awareness and supporting people with disabilities."

For the Ruderman Best in Business award

nomination, one customer who shops at the Safeway in Potomac, MD, was moved by the inclusion that she sees at the store and wrote in her nomination, "Wendy, the woman who bags groceries at Safeway, is obviously mentally challenged, but she never fails to be helpful and courteous to those with whom she comes into contact. I believe her attitude could only come from working in a place that values her as a team member and as a person."

Store director Gwen Wilson confirms that the environment in her store is one of support and encouragement among all the employees. "We have an employee on our team who sometimes gets frustrated if she thinks she can't get a job



Manager Gwen Wilson and Potomac, MD Safeway staff.

done. Her co-workers are very supportive and work with her to ensure she can accomplish her tasks," Wilson explains. "She regularly says that her managers and fellow employees are so nice because they always help her."

Safeway is not only committed to hiring people with disabilities, but the chain of stores also supports disability organizations like Special Olympics and Easter Seals.

Special Olympics is part of the Safeway Foundation's annual customer fundraising campaign in which the store dedicates a month each year to raising funds and awareness to help people with disabilities. In 2008 the Safeway Foundation designated Special Olympics as a beneficiary of its successful campaign. While the hallmark of the campaign is a \$1 donation at checkout, the company also uses in-store broadcasts and video messages to customers and employees to share information about breakthroughs in research and new pro-



**Safeway**  
(Potomac, MD)

**BEST IN BUSINESS**

**i** Safeway, a Fortune 100 company, is one of the largest food and drug retailers in North America. The company has 1,761 stores in the United States and Canada.

**👥** Inclusion and diversity in employees is part of Safeway's mission

**“** I believe her attitude could only come from working in a place that values her as a team member and as a person. **”**

[www.safeway.com](http://www.safeway.com)

grams that help millions of people with disabilities in North America and around the world.

To date, Safeway has raised and donated more than \$220 million to support organizations including Special Olympics, Easter Seals, and a range of other organizations that help people with disabilities. ●



# ‘Embracing Differences, Sparking Innovation’

SAP’s ‘Autism at Work’ program has ambitious goals.

In the next decade, more than 500,000 children in the United States who are diagnosed with autism will become adults. To date, there is no national plan for the housing, vocational and/or therapeutic supports that they will likely need.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological condition that, while manifesting different symptoms in each person who has the diagnosis, is characterized by the condition’s impact on communication and social understanding. Fifty percent of people with ASD also have an intellectual disability diagnosis and need more support in terms of both education and care.

However, among the half of people with autism who have no cognitive disability, finding competitive employment still remains challenging: 85 percent of adults with autism are unemployed and of the 15 percent with jobs, most are working part-time.

Enter SAP, a global enterprise software application company. In 2013, SAP began its “Autism at Work” program with support from Specialisterne, an international nonprofit organization dedicated to harnessing the talents of people with autism to find technology-related jobs. The company now employs 100 people with autism serving in a number of different positions in IT, programming, HR and in other departments in seven different countries

including Australia, Brazil, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, India, Ireland and the United States, with plans to hire more in South Korea this year. The company’s goal is ambitious: by 2020, it plans to make 1 percent of the company’s workforce employees with autism.

SAP’s Autism at Work program, lead by Jose Velasco, a father of two children on the autism spectrum, partners with organizations that advocate for adults with disabilities in the workforce, including The Arc and Expandability. Velasco is clear that the program is not about charity or philanthropy; it is about finding an overlooked talent pool of people who possess qualities that SAP seeks: detail-oriented and meticulous, with a high ability to focus and concentrate, and loyal to the company. These are all qualities that are characteristic of people on the Asperger Syndrome side of the ASD spectrum.

However, these highly intelligent, highly focused and motivated employees can struggle with the social and communication aspects of being in a workplace. To support them, SAP’s Autism At Work program utilizes a team approach. Each employee not only works with a manager or direct supervisor, but also receives support from a mentor — a fellow employee who volunteers to help the Autism At Work employee learn to socialize in the work setting. The mentor meets his/her mentee for monthly lunches and encourages participation in team

outings like group trips to see a ballgame.

For employees like Patrick Viesti, these supports have made employment at SAP a dream come true. While Viesti did well in high school and college, he struggled at job interviews. SAP has created alternatives to traditional interviews, which many people with autism find stressful — instead, they can participate in a training process in which managers can get to know their skills and assets, and determine how they could best match those skills to a job at SAP. Viesti has not only succeeded in his tech job, but enjoys participating in regular outings with his co-workers.



SAP

BEST IN BUSINESS



SAP is an international business, known as a market leader in enterprise application software.



SAP hires people “In spite of Autism and Because of Autism.” In spite refers to how people with autism, in spite of the challenges that they face, show resilience, dedication and burning desire to work. “Because of autism” refers to the special perspective people with autism bring to problem solving and the unique skills that can be leveraged in business.



“By embracing differences, we help spark innovation — while challenging assumptions and inspiring change.”

[www.go.sap.com](http://www.go.sap.com)

SAP, which focuses on diversity and inclusion in many different ways, including emphasizing cross-generational intelligence and awareness of gender diversity, explains its commitment to the Autism at Work program stating, “By embracing differences, we help spark innovation — while challenging assumptions and inspiring change.” ●



# The Up Side Of UPS' Hiring Philosophy

## Training program at hub in Louisville has provided 150 employees with range of disabilities.

At Worldport, UPS' main air hub for global transportation in Louisville, KY., more than 10,000 union employees work to label, organize and ship freight that is sent out all over the world. For management, the need to hire and retain hard workers who are loyal to the company and bring a great attitude to the working environment is ongoing, as UPS' business continues to expand.

Enter the Transitional Learning Center (TLC). TLC began at UPS in September 2014. Located within Worldport, TLC is a two-week training program designed for people with a range of disabilities including Down syndrome, autism and visual and hearing losses that simulates the work environment of hub employees.

Participants get both classroom training in work culture and socialization, and hands-on experience in a number of different jobs in the freight facility. The state-of-the-art training center includes a sort belter, a tractor-trailer and mock packages that make the transition to the real facility easier for the trainees.

TLC is a project of the Coalition For Workforce Diversity, a network of employers, service providers and others who work together to support people with disabilities seeking employment opportunities. The Coalition works

to make the hiring, training and integration process as seamless as possible — so that employers feel no major change in current workflow processes. This support was essential in order for a company like UPS, where workflow production is continual and time sensitive, to commit to diversify its employees to include people with disabilities.

According to Scott Gregory, UPS Worldport training manager, TLC and the employees who have come out of the training have been a great success. UPS Worldport has hired 150 individuals with disabilities so far and continues to bring more people into TLC. Gregory emphasizes that the employees who finish TLC are qualified and hard working. He is now working with Options Unlimited, an organization that serves adults with disabilities in Kentucky, to find more potential TLC participants, in the hope of adding more employees with disabilities to the UPS workforce.

Gregory also notes how colleagues of the TLC graduates have responded to working side by side with them. He recalls a recent morning when a manager had gathered a team of employees for a pre-shift communication meeting — in which supervisors and workers have an opportunity to share what's on their mind. One employee, who has

Down syndrome, told his co-workers that he felt moved to lead the National Anthem and invited everyone to stand and sing with him. "It lifted everyone's spirits to sing with them and truly got them ready for their day," he says.

TLC has earned a distinguished honor for its dedication to inclusion in the workplace, as the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) named Worldport its "Large Employer of the Year." The APSE is a national organization supporting the employment of individuals with disabilities; its vision is a world where "people with all types of disabilities are employed, pursuing careers and building assets just like people without disabilities."



**UPS**  
BEST IN BUSINESS

- i** United Parcel Service, Inc. is the world's largest package delivery company and a provider of supply chain management solutions.
- u** UPS has created TLC, a two-week training program that gives hands-on skills to people with disabilities so that they can succeed at UPS.
- q** "The TLC helped me realize that even though I have a disability, I can work. I love my job and I'll do anything to help the TLC help other people understand that they can work, too."

[www.ups.com](http://www.ups.com)

For many TLC graduates, the experience has been life changing. TLC graduate Michael Karimian, who works in the Wing Unload division of UPS Worldport says, "The TLC helped me realize that even though I have a disability, I can work. I love my job and I'll do anything to help the TLC help other people understand that they can work, too." ●



# Serving Veterans

## Xerox's disability outreach program gives returning soldiers (and others) the support they need in the workplace.

Xerox's disability outreach program gives returning soldiers (and others) the support they need in the workplace.

America's newest veterans, those who have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have sought compensation for injuries sustained during their service at more than double the rate of soldiers returning from the Gulf War.

Advocates for veterans believe that this occurs, among other factors, because many returning injured vets cannot find work. What these vets need, advocates argue, are companies that can support them as they adjust to living with their physical and psychological wounds and transfer the skills that they mastered in the military to a workplace setting.

In 2008, Xerox Corporation began a military, university and disability outreach program in North America to expand and better track recruiting and retention efforts for transitioning members of the military, veterans, their families and also individuals with disabilities not related to military service. Xerox has collaborated with over 700 community and veteran agencies nationwide that refer potential employees to Xerox.

"Our activities have included hosting open houses in Lexington, KY, Colorado Springs, CO, and Tigard and Portland, OR, to familiarize local organizations with our operations," explains Carla Webster, program manager for

military, university and disability outreach at Xerox. "We have also conducted pre-employment workshops to help referral candidates better showcase their skills and qualifications. These collaborative efforts enable reaching and recruiting more people with disabilities, while helping us fulfill a need in our communities and promote a diverse culture in our workplaces."

With each hiring of a person with disabilities, Xerox has found ways to make the company more accessible. For example, to better accommodate a visually impaired employee in the Lexington customer care center, Xerox began coordinating with counselors from the Kentucky Office for the Blind (OFB). This led the company to install visual enhancement software in the facility, helping to expand job opportunities to others who need visual assistance for testing during the interview process and to fulfill their job responsibilities as employees.

In December 2013, the OFB honored Xerox with the Partnership Award for the company's contribution to its mission: providing opportunities of employment and independence for people with visual disabilities.

Carla Webster recognizes that Xerox's new approach to hiring has brought amazing employees to the company. For example, Audrey, who was diagnosed with vitamin D resistance rickets that has curtailed her bone growth since an early age. Audrey supports her

4-foot-2-inch frame with crutches. She has helped Xerox implement training programs in various U.S. locations and enjoys the direct relationship between training and improved employee service.

"I understand first-hand the self-consciousness people with disabilities may experience; I sometimes still wonder how my size impacts people's perception of me and my abilities," Audrey said. "I enjoy playing a part in the success of the variety of people who come to Xerox, from entry-level employees to professionals who were displaced from their previous jobs due to age or disability. My physical challenges have never been an impediment to Xerox offer-



Xerox Corporation



Xerox is a 100-year-old global corporation that sells business services and document technology products.



Xerox works with local agencies that support veterans and people with disabilities to find new talent.



"My physical challenges have never been an impediment to Xerox offering opportunities for growth, and I do my best to let employees know that Xerox will give them more, if they want more — it depends on their drive."

www.xerox.com

ing opportunities for growth, and I do my best to let employees know that Xerox will give them more, if they want more — it depends on their drive. We're here to support and develop them."

In 2015, Xerox had hired more than 2,400 employees in the United States who self-disclosed that they are individuals with disabilities, and 1,700 veterans, many who are among those employees with disabilities. ●



# Nothing Pie In The Sky Here

**A Cape Cod pie company has all the right ingredients for inclusive hiring.**

Before opening the Centerville Pie Company on Cape Cod, co-owner Kristin Broadley worked in a bank and twice lived through the terrifying experience of bank robbery. After the second robbery she knew that she needed to make a professional change, and contemplated what it would be like to do something that she was passionate about. She and her friend Laurie Bowen had a tradition of baking chicken pies for family and friends for the holidays every year. Their pies were treasured — and requests were always coming in for more pies throughout the year. So Broadley decided to follow her heart, left the bank, and with the support of family and friends purchased a small space that had been a restaurant and converted it into a pie shop.

That was in 2008 and like any start-up, the Centerville Pie Company had its struggles. But soon the pie shop's fortune would change. In 2009, Eunice Kennedy Shriver died and her funeral was held in nearby Hyannis, Mass. Among the many celebrated guests that came to pay their respects to Shriver's family were Oprah Winfrey and her best friend, Gayle King. Broadley and Bowen decided to drop off a chicken pie and a peach pie with a personal note for Oprah at the hotel where she was staying — with no expectation that the pies would make it past the front desk.

But within a few hours, Broadley's phone was ringing — and it was Gayle and Oprah calling. They loved the pies so much that they invited the women to come on the Oprah show and listed the pies in Oprah's "favorite things" in her magazine. With that Midas touch, the little pie shop that could had more orders than it could fill.

Broadley was familiar with an agency called Cape Abilities that helps adults with disabilities find meaningful employment. She imagined that there were adults with disabilities who could perform many of the tasks required to make her company



*Centerville Pie staff at work assembling their famous creations.*

more efficient, including peeling apples, baking pies and assembling and labeling boxes.

“Being familiar with Cape Abilities from my days at the bank, I realized that was the organization we could have a substantial impact upon,” she explains. The Pie Company built a new production kitchen at the Cape Abilities facility and began hiring and training the adults it serves. Over the years, the company has trained and hired well over 50 of them. For some it's a stepping stone to other jobs, and for others, it's the beginning of a career.



The Centerville Pie Company



The Centerville Pie Company, based in Cape Cod, Mass., makes custom-baked pies that are sold in its café and also shipped online around the world. The pies have been included in Oprah's "Favorite Things."



The Centerville Pie Company partners with Cape Abilities, an organization that supports adults with disabilities and is now providing jobs for more than 30 adults with disabilities.



“I enjoy the people and learning about working in a kitchen. Making pies is like an art. I take pride in my work.”

[www.centervillepies.com](http://www.centervillepies.com)

The vision worked — for the company, the new employees, and the Cape Cod community. Employee Elaine Bena shares, “I enjoy the people and learning about working in a kitchen making pies is like an art. I take pride in my work.”

The Centerville Pie Company owners have noticed a change in the Cape Cod business community since they began partnering with Cape Abilities. Now, many more local businesses are doing the same thing and giving Cape Abilities workers a chance. Those workers “are the lifeblood of our organization,” Broadley says. ●



# Inclusion, From Top To Bottom

**Sodexo carries its philosophy of hiring people with disabilities throughout the whole company.**

Sodexo, a food services and facilities management company, was founded in 1966 in Marseille, France, and today operates in 80 countries and has 420,000 employees worldwide; it is the 19th largest employer in the world. Sodexo serves many different sectors, including elementary schools and universities, assisted-living facilities, military bases, government agencies, private corporations and prisons.

Sodexo management has taken a fully integrated approach to hiring people with disabilities, focusing on all company processes, including recruitment, retention, professional development, training, accommodations, partnerships, communications, and accountability. SOAR stands for “Sodexo Organization for Disability Resources” and is an Employee Business Resource Group. Around the world Sodexo has three disabilities networks with 592 members in three countries and on two different continents.

To date, Sodexo’s disability initiatives reach 86 percent of its workforce in 25 countries. The company’s goal is to reach 100 percent of its workforce in 80 countries by 2025.

In the U.S., Sodexo works closely with organizations that focus explicitly on people with disabilities, and also recognizes that many military/veteran organizations are strong sources that fall into this category, because of the “visible” (often physical) and “invisible” (often psychiat-

ric) disabilities that can occur with military service. The company builds relationships, holds career fairs, and posts positions with military/veteran-focused organizations including Vet-Central – Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Representatives (DVOPs), U.S. Jobs Veterans, Veteran’s Enterprise, Military.com, Military Base Transition Offices and Military Network.

Sodexo has created a Disability Sourcing Team comprised of members of the Talent Acquisition Group, along with a cross-section of HR and hiring partners across the company. This team works in partnership with the Disability (SOAR) and Veteran (HONOR) focused Employee Business Resource Groups to assist in expanding the company’s recruiting reach.

Sodexo has also built relationships with colleges and universities that include a large enrollment of individuals with disabilities and also a focus on veterans. These colleges and universities are sources for their Future Leaders Internship Program and for entry-level positions. For the last three years, Sodexo has worked closely with the Disabilities Services Offices at Canisius College and the University of Buffalo to attract interns for the Financial Services operations, which is based in Buffalo, N.Y.

With its integrated approach to supporting people with visible and invisible disabilities, Sodexo has become expert at creating accommodations for employees who enter the company with dis-

abilities, and also those who acquire them over time. For employee Claire Collins, who has been with Sodexo for over 13 years in the press and public relations department, living with a chronic condition means that she copes with long-lasting and recurring headaches and migraines. Over time, Collins’ migraines have become more and more disabling, and she takes medication in an effort to control them. Yet her condition has not hindered her advancement within the company; instead her managers believe that Collins is very talented at her job and that it makes good business sense to give her the flexibility she needs when her migraines present.

Sodexo’s management philosophy, which focuses on abilities and strengths, is established

**Sodexo Inc.**

**BEST IN BUSINESS**

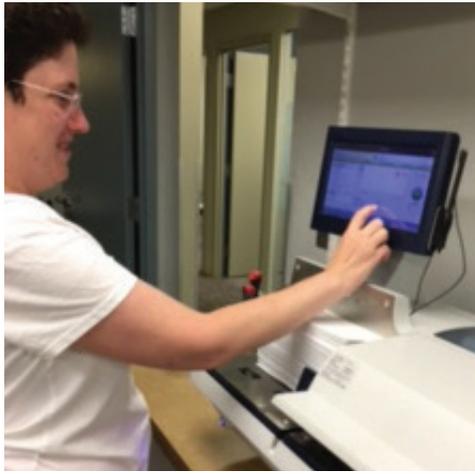
**i** Sodexo was founded in 1966 in Marseille, France, and operates in 80 countries; it has 420,000 employees worldwide, making it the world’s 19th largest employer.

**g** Sodexo’s Talent Acquisition team has created a strategy for recruiting people with disabilities. Key components include increasing sourcing, recruiting, and outreach.

**«** **“Have a knowledge of the population you’re working with, and look for positive attributes. Always try to accentuate strengths and not just focus on shortcomings.”**

[www.sodexousa.com](http://www.sodexousa.com)

throughout the company, starting from the top corporate level and reaching to the directors of facilities Sodexo serves around the world. “Reach out and arm yourself with information up front. I think when people hear that someone has a disability, they may be a little afraid to bring them into their establishments, but it’s such a broad word that doesn’t do justice to the people,” says Jason Fibble, Sodexo’s director of retail operations at Tulane University. “Have a knowledge of the population you’re working with, and look for positive attributes. Always try to accentuate strengths and not just focus on shortcomings. We all have shortcomings.” ●



# You've Got Mail, From Shayna Joseph

**Barkan Management Company's mailroom clerk is emblematic of its hiring philosophy.**

Since its founding in 1964, Barkan Management Company has been an industry leader in the residential real estate sector. With over 550 employees and 23,000 units under its management in Boston, throughout New England and also in the Greater Washington, D.C., area, Barkan provides, in addition to property management, other related services including accounting, renovation, brokerage, development and affordable housing compliance.

Thirty-eight years ago, Barkan hired its first employee with a disability. That employee was deaf and Barkan installed a TTY line for her to use for phone calls, and, eventually, also communicated with her via email rather than through talking. She worked a total of 37 years at the company and single-handedly ran Barkan's payroll department for over 30 years until she retired.

Over the years, Barkan Management has continued to hire people based on their abilities and qualifications, and to date, the company has hired eight employees who have disabilities.

Shayna Joseph, who has Asperger's Syndrome, has worked at Barkan for the last nine years. She was originally hired as a file

clerk, but that position was eliminated when the company went paperless. Barkan decided to train Joseph to run the mailroom, process invoices electronically and help the accounts payable department. This position came with much more responsibility than her role as file clerk did and also required the juggling of tasks. Joseph is now responsible for all incoming and outgoing mail, which includes over 2,000 vendor checks each week.

Office manager Janet Damelin says, "Shayna is incredibly responsible and works well independently. She has taught us all that a disability does not prevent a person from leading a full, independent, productive life. Shayna is our 'go to person' when anyone needs help with a project and never says no."

It happens that Damelin worked as a special education teacher for 12 years before coming to work for Barkan, and was able to use her background to provide coaching and support as Joseph adjusted to her first position and then transitioned into her next role.

For Joseph, who works a five-day, 30-hour week at Barkan, her job has become a source of pride and stability. "I started looking for a job after I graduated from the Lesley Uni-



**Barkan  
Management  
Company Inc.**



The Barkan Companies are a diversified group of real estate businesses with a solid record of success in property management, construction and development.



Barkan management believes that a disability does not prevent one from being a productive employee, and focuses on qualifications, not disability.



**"I am happy to have this job, and it is going well. I have been here for a long, long time. I enjoy it."**

[www.barkanco.com](http://www.barkanco.com)

versity Threshold Program, and it was hard," she says. "I did work at a couple of different jobs but nothing permanent. They were good experience because I learned things at each one. Barkan Management Company has provided me with the permanent position, and I am happy to have this job and it is going well. I have been here for a long, long time. I enjoy it." ●



# Making Hiring More 'Convenient'

The Wawa chain has a longstanding commitment to employing adults with disabilities.

What many loyal customers who stop by the convenience store don't know is that over 100 years ago, Wawa was a dairy farm delivering milk to households in the suburbs and small towns around Philadelphia. Just over 50 years ago, when many people moved away from home milk delivery and started buying milk in stores, Wawa transformed to become one of the first convenience store chains — where people could stop to pick up milk, bread, candy and other items.

From the success of its first convenience store, Wawa expanded to open stores all over the Greater Philadelphia area, into neighboring states New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware and more recently into Virginia and Florida. In 2015, Forbes magazine ranked Wawa as 34th on its list of the largest private companies.

Many of the Wawa's 750 stores are also gas stations, and throughout the company, Wawa employs 28,000 associates. Thirty-five years ago, managers in human resources first started to partner with local social service agencies that serve adults with disabilities, with the hopes of finding an untapped talent pool to join the expanding Wawa team.

One such agency, Eden Autism, based in Princeton, N.J., runs a vocational training program for adults with autism. In this pro-

gram, Eden provides different types of employment training and placement, based on a person's strengths and challenges: center-based employment, in which participants remain at Eden's center and work there on projects; supported employment, in which participants work in the community under the supervision of a job coach; and competitive employment, in which participants are able to work independently with minimal supervision. Wawa has worked with Eden and many other similar agencies in both bringing



A Wawa staff person gifted her hat to a customer with autism who admired it... and has hopes for one day working at the store.

in employees who need job coaches to support them and also with placing employees who are able to be more independent in roles that match their skills.

The results have been positive for the employees who are hired, for management, for Wawa customers, and for the team of employees in the store.

"We've hired countless numbers of associates with disabilities over the past 35 years," says Gwendelyn Ruff, the company's talent acquisition supervisor. "Today we currently have 296 associates with disabilities employed."



Wawa Inc.

BEST IN BUSINESS

**i** Wawa is a family-owned chain of convenience stores in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and Florida.

**u** Wawa partners with social service agencies that support people with disabilities and find job placements for people with disabilities in its stores.

**“** “I couldn't be prouder to work for an organization that allows us the opportunity to make a difference in Shane's life and him in ours.”

[www.wawa.com](http://www.wawa.com)

One general manager shared about Shane, an associate who has disabilities. “Shane has taught us how to be positive in the most stressful of days, how to be kind and caring to one another, how a smile can warm up a room, and most importantly the value of having someone on your team that truly cares about its members and would do anything for you,” she explains. “I couldn't be prouder to work for an organization that allows us the opportunity to make a difference in Shane's life and him in ours.” ●



# Engine Of Opportunity

**Illinois Subaru dealer opens the door for an autistic man who simply adores cars.**

Having an “obsession” is a common occurrence for people who have autism. Obsessions can provide structure and help people cope with the uncertainties of life. Some people who find social interaction difficult may use their special interests as a way to start conversations.

Shmuel Emanuel is a 23-year-old man with autism and other challenges who is obsessed with cars. He is not yet able to read, write, tell time or count. However, he knows every car, key and cell phone out there. He has obsessed about cars, keys, phones, and cleaning since toddler age. His absolute favorite car is a silver Jeep Laredo.

“An example” of his obsessional behavior, recalls his mother Dvora Emanuel, “is when I would take my children to the grocery store [he is No. 5 of 6]. I always avoided the candy/cookie aisle with them and went down the neutral cleaning-supply aisle. Once Shmuel came along, that was no longer an option — he whined for mops and soaps the way the others did for candy.”

When Emanuel was transitioning from high school, he was fortunate to enter a program that envisioned his obsession with cars in a positive way.

That program, called GADOL — Giving Adults Daily Opportunities for Living — provides vocational training and places partic-

ipants in customized employment in which their interests and skills are matched with a company that can use them. GADOL is a program of Keshet, an organization that serves the Greater Chicago Jewish community with a number of educational, recreational, vocational, residential and social programs for people with disabilities.

Abbie Weisberg, Keshet’s executive director, knew that working in an environment with cars would be extremely motivating for Shmuel. So she approached one of the owners of Evanston Subaru, a large dealership in Skokie, IL, about creating an internship opportunity for Emanuel in which he would be supported with job coaching. She explained that Emanuel simply adores cars — and that working in a car dealership would be his dream job.

At first, owner Rob Paddor hesitated. His concern was that the car dealership’s environment is an extremely busy one — with customers shopping for new and used cars, seeking auto financing and coming in to the service center. Employees work at fast pace, and Paddor was concerned that someone with autism might not be able to keep up. But he was willing to give Emanuel a chance, and he agreed to at least meet him. The meeting was arranged like a job interview. Emanuel answered Paddor’s questions, and when asked what his favorite car is, Emanuel surprisingly and very socially appropriately answered,

“Subaru.” That was five years ago — and Emanuel’s internship has since transformed into paid, full-time employment.

Paddor runs a tight operation and doesn’t tolerate dust on any of the cars in his showroom. Emanuel’s tasks include wiping down those cars, which he does expertly, and also keeping the customer lounge, that serves snacks and drinks, clean and free of trash. “Shmuel loves putting on his uniform,” says Paddor. “And customers appreciate seeing him.”

“The staff is so supportive of him, and go the extra mile to make him feel valued, and successful,” says Dvora. “They always have positive reports for me. He no longer needs any outside assistance — job coach or sup-



**BEST IN  
BUSINESS**

## Evanston Subaru

**i** Evanston Subaru in Skokie, IL, is a new and used car dealership in Chicago, Highland Park, and Evanston with auto repair, car parts, and auto finance.

**u** Working in partnership with Keshet, an agency that serves people with disabilities in the Chicago area, Evanston Subaru has hired employees with disabilities to work in its busy auto showroom.

**“** “The staff is so supportive of him, and go the extra mile to make him feel valued, and successful. ... He no longer needs any outside assistance.”

[www.evanstonsubaru.com](http://www.evanstonsubaru.com)

port staff — the dealership staff have taken on those roles as needed.”

Recently, Paddor and Emanuel were recognized at Keshet’s Employer Appreciation Lunch. Emanuel stood before a crowded room, proudly sharing about his work at Evanston Subaru. ●



# Ready, Willing And 'Able'

The newest innovations in grocery chain's long history of hiring high school students with disabilities.

Thirty-five years ago, Dale Giovengo, the human resources director for Giant Eagle, a chain of grocery and convenience stores in Western Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana, approached the company's CEO, David Shapira, with an idea: to recruit and hire people with disabilities to work in Giant Eagle stores. Shapira was initially reluctant to encourage Giovengo's idea — he was mostly concerned that customers might react negatively towards employees with visible disabilities. But he trusted his HR director's instincts and told Giovengo to go for it, deciding it was worth a shot.

Almost immediately, Shapira was amazed at the flood of positive comments from Giant Eagle customers. People would share written and verbal feedback about their interactions with the new Giant Eagle employees — Shapira would frequently hear comments like, "I will only check out in so-and-so's line..." or "I look for so-and-so when I go to the deli..." letting the company know that their inclusive approach to hiring was not only being tolerated, but was being embraced.

While Giovengo has moved on to work in another position and Shapira has retired, the practice of hiring people with disabilities has continued and been expanded in the last 35 years throughout the company. Shapira's son, Jeffrey, now serves as the director of special

projects on inclusion and diversity and is working on a number of initiatives to support employees with disabilities through the stores.

One such initiative was a pilot program with the United Way called "21 and Able." The two-year pilot began in 2013 and was focused on giving high school students with disabilities, who often struggle to find job placement once their educational supports end at 21. The program embedded a disability professional into the company — someone who could look at the managers' store processes and help them adapt training and support for employees with disabilities.

"21 and Able" was a real success — Giant Eagle hired and retained 24 high school students over a six-month period. The company maintained the position of disability liaison — in Pittsburgh one full-time professional works with high school students and another works with adults. There are also liaisons in Cleveland and Columbus.

Employees with disabilities work in a range of positions within Giant Eagle, from bagging groceries to working in the bakery and prepared food sections, meat wrapping (which is a skilled position) and car wash attendant.

"We've had to do very little inclusion training for our staff," explains Jeremy Shapira. "It's our

Giant Eagle culture to want to help each other."

Shapira partners with a number of nonprofit agencies that serve adults with disabilities: Achieva and Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services in Pittsburgh, and New Avenues to Independence and Goodwill in Cleveland. He encourages other companies to pursue similar partnerships. "You don't have to go it alone," he says. "Use their expertise."

With Achieva, Giant Eagle is working on a new vision: job carving. Job carving is a process in which work duties are analyzed and specific tasks are identified that might be assigned for people with more severe disabilities. With this approach, Giant Eagle has recently hired



Giant Eagle



Giant Eagle operates 400 grocery and convenience stores in Western Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana.



Giant Eagle has integrated people with disabilities into its employee pool for the last 35 years and now partners with different agencies to keep expanding its support and training for people with disabilities.



"It's our Giant Eagle culture to want to help each other."

[www.gianteagle.com](http://www.gianteagle.com)

a woman who has more complex needs and found tasks that she can do, including restocking coffee cups and wiping down counters.

Shapira looks forward to where the company is going, knowing that hiring people with disabilities is firmly woven into his company's culture. He often speaks about the work that Giant Eagle is doing with other companies — and acknowledges to them that the biggest hurdle is the fear factor that his father felt 35 years ago. "Once you bridge that, anything is possible," he says. ●



# All In The Kosher Family

**At a Bergen County glatt supermarket, students from a nearby school for the developmentally disabled gain vocational and life skills.**

Grand and Essex Glatt Kosher Supermarket in Bergenfield, N.J., has all the luxuries of a modern gourmet market: beautifully prepared foods, fresh fish and meats, a bakery, sushi and a plentiful health and beauty section. But what customers comment on is the “Old World” feeling of the store — a place where the owners and employees go that extra mile to show their customers that they care. When it’s time for festive Jewish holidays like Chanukah and Purim, the owners of Grand and Essex turn the whole store into a place for celebration — last Purim featured clowns, music and treats for the little ones. Many customers remember that during Hurricane Sandy, Grand and Essex owners were providing meals for those without electricity, with no questions asked.

Among the store’s employees are people who have developmental disabilities — they are part of the store family. Giving people with disabilities the opportunity to work in the store is not part of a formal program or initiative — it’s simply part of the culture the owners have created, grounded in the Jewish value of *menschlekeit*, human decency.

In the store’s neighborhood is a group home for adults with disabilities and a number of these adults work in the store several hours each day, helping with all kinds of tasks. And Grand and Essex is also helping young people, who are in high school at one of the SINAI Schools, prepare for their transition to adulthood by getting work experience at the store.

The SINAI Schools organization is widely regarded as one of the country’s leading Jewish educational systems for children with learning or developmental disabilities whose needs cannot be met in a regular education setting. The specialized schools, which are housed within Jewish elementary and high schools, serve children with a wide range of disabilities, providing individualized programming, highly specialized services, in-house therapies and a 1:2 teacher-to-student ratio.

The focus of the high school program is on functional academics — providing students with the skills they need to succeed as they move into adulthood, with an emphasis on vocational preparedness and life skills. Vocational training in real work environments like Grand and Essex help these students gain experience, build confidence and get the opportunity to try out different tasks.

“What makes this partnership unique is that Grand and Essex sought us out. Since its inception, Grand and Essex intuitively understood the mutual benefit of employing individuals with disabilities, so much so, that they reached out to us at SINAI in the hopes of being able to employ our students,” explains Esther Klavan, director of SINAI Shalem High School at Torah Academy of Bergen County. “What makes a job site most successful is a genuine interest on the part of the employer to recognize the abilities of our students, actual tasks that our

students can complete in order to contribute to the success of the work place, and an overall feeling of being a valued member of a team. Grand & Essex hits all three of these points spot-on. In doing so, our students have learned the importance of time management, interpersonal skills, and problem solving on the job.

“These are life skills that they will carry with them for many years to come,” Klavan continues. “It is apparent that the way that our students are valued at Grand and Essex comes from the top down, so much so, that several employees came to one of our student’s graduation ceremony, mid-day, to support their co-worker not just in words, but in action. It continues to be a privilege to partner with Grand and Essex, as well as to shop there. Not just because of their amazing popcorn, but because they truly understand that every individual has abilities, and is most produc-



BEST IN BUSINESS

## Grand and Essex Market



Grand and Essex is a kosher supermarket located in Bergenfield, N.J.



The owners of Grand and Essex focus on *menschlekeit* and treat their employees and customers like family.



“The employers of this store are sincere, kind and genuine and I can think of no business more deserving...”

[www.grandandessex.com](http://www.grandandessex.com)

tive when utilizing those abilities to their fullest.”

Grand and Essex customers notice and appreciate the warm, inclusive environment that the owners and managers have created. One customer recently wrote, “I’ve seen the managers engrossed in conversations with those with disabilities and those without, with no difference in between the two, in terms of attentiveness and caring. The employers of this store are sincere, kind, and genuine and I can think of no business more deserving for the Ruderman Best in Business award...” ●



# A Café With Compassion

**Boston's Power Café empowers its employees, in the dining room and in the kitchen.**

If you're in the Boston area and looking for a Sunday brunch place, check out Watertown's new Power Café. The café features homemade challah, Mediterranean-influenced salads with clever names like "A Fig-Mint Of Your Imagination" and platters of frittatas, fruit and bread pudding. Yelp reviewers appreciate both the tasty menu and also the fresh muffins and cookies that are available to go.

The Power Café is the brainchild of Galit Schwartz, a former software engineer, teacher and mother of five children, who spent several years volunteering with children who have Down syndrome and learning more about disability rights issues. Schwartz read about social enterprises like bakeries and cafés in other communities in which adults with disabilities were given vocational training and support and were able to be out in front of the business, interacting with customers and being part of the community. "I thought, why isn't there a place like that in Boston? Several months later I thought, 'If not I, then who? And if not now, then when?'" says Schwartz, who opened the café in fall of 2015.

Schwartz partnered with Triangle Inc., a Malden, MA-based organization that provides vocational coaching and other services for adults with disabilities. Triangle helped Schwartz create a training manual for employees and also introduced her to two potential employees who had completed the organization's culinary arts training course.

Those graduates, Stephen Mallett and Rachel Gatzunis, the café's two employees (along with Schwartz), bring unique strengths to the business. Mallett, who is 48, worked for an antibiotics company before having a stroke eight years ago. Mallett always loved cooking as a hobby and prefers working in the back of the café, where he excels at food preparation. Gatzunis is 22 and is eager, enthusiastic and very social — perfect qualities for the front of the café, where she greets customers and takes orders.

"Power Café is staffed and run entirely by people with physical and/or developmental disabilities. I am very excited about creating a venue



*Stephen Mallett at work in Power Café's kitchen.*

which not only creates real opportunities for people with disabilities, but does so in a context where they can interact in a powerful, autonomous way with the mainstream community," Schwartz explains. "I see this as building bridges and forming personal connections to overcome prejudice and stereotypes."

Throughout every aspect of her cozy venue, Schwartz considers ways to empower people with disabilities. Power Café features Maryland's Furnace Hills Coffee, whose roaster has Down syndrome. The art on the café walls is made by people with disabilities who attend Gateway Arts in nearby Brookline. The menu is available in large print and in Braille. Half the tables left to her by the previous owner were moved to the basement to make space for wheelchairs to maneuver. A special door was put in for easier accessibility.



Power Café



This local café in Watertown, MA, offers a family-friendly environment and focuses on disability awareness through employment, art, and café design.



Owner Galit Schwartz wants to make disability visible in her café and community and the café is staffed entirely by people with disabilities.



"If not I, then who?  
And if not now, then when?"

[www.thepowercafe.com](http://www.thepowercafe.com)

Schwartz recognizes that she is helping her community see people with disabilities in a new light. Working at the café is having a profound effect on both of her employees, she says. Rachel Gatzunis has begun to imagine herself as an entrepreneur like Schwartz. "One of my main goals is to open a café or restaurant like this one run by people with disabilities because of my own personal disabilities," she says. "I don't think anyone should be discriminated against." ●



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