

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, which is very appropriate for Mike (whose identity we would like to keep confidential) because he just got a job and he can celebrate! This news is big because Mike has not had a full time steady job for over 20 years. When he was about 20, he experienced a set-back that, as the saying goes, kicked the legs right out from under him. Since then his work history has been limited and, as you can imagine, Mike could not have gained a whole lot of work experience by the age of 20. He went through much training and counseling after his accident to get re-prepared for the workforce and, actually, for life in general. When times improved for Mike, he found a job at a local bakery where he stayed for four years. He left that job to start his own painting company which he did for two years. Following that, he found work as a dispatcher and worked there for five and one half years. Actually, in today's job market, Mike would be considered a pretty typical job seeker/employee.

Believe it or not, Mike did not drive during his latter work years so his choices for jobs were limited. He did have support from his wife and family, however. Recently, the Division of Rehabilitative Services assisted Mike in helping in his quest to become independent by helping him get hand controls for his vehicle. You see, Mike literally had his legs taken right out from under him. In an accident, he became paralyzed below his waist and now uses a wheelchair. He has been able to drive for about a year but for longer than that, he has been searching for a job.

It is actually hard to believe that, in this tight labor market, Mike did not find employment much quicker. I wonder if those businesses he approached were able to see beyond his wheelchair. The company that ended up hiring him has hired others with disabilities. Apparently, the company gets it. People with disabilities tend to have higher retention rates and all other good labor statistics tend to be equal or better than counterparts without disabilities. But, if you have read any of my previous articles, you would have heard that information before.

So, have you gotten it yet? Have you recruited or hired someone with a disability? Since October is a special month, today would be a good time to try it! Visit our newly revised web site at www.esbln.org, look under "Service Providers" or "Employer Support – Contractual Services" and start recruiting from the many agencies that work to get people with disabilities employed! You can also recruit from staffing agencies to "try out" your new employee. Believe me; they will want the opportunity to try you out as well! Happy Recruiting!