

By Jackie Gast, Director

One thing we can most all agree upon is there is a people shortage in the work place. Recruiting people with disabilities is not what most of us do but why not? Probably it is fear of the unknown. One myth is that insurance costs for our company may increase if we do. First of all, did you know people with disabilities are not looking for insurance when they knock on your door? They are looking for a job. Additionally, for any small business in the state of Maryland employing two to fifty employees, insurance rates are not affected by claims nor are they affected if the new employee has an existing disability. Employers in your business neighborhood who recruit and hire people with disabilities have experienced lower recruitment costs, higher retention rates, and even higher morale among co-workers of people with disabilities. So where do you find these individuals?

On the lower shore of the Delmarva Peninsula, LSE Lower Shore Enterprises (lseworks.org), Dove Pointe (dovepointe.com), Shore Employment Services (410.546.7767), Deaf and Independent Living (dila.org), HCI, Inc. (hollycommunity.org), Blind Industries (bism.org) and Worcester County Developmental Center (wcdcservices.org) are some of the organizations involved in supportive employment services for people with all types of disabilities. Supportive employment is a tried and true method that increases the success of placing individuals in competitive employment. Also the school systems are an excellent source of workers as well. For a much more comprehensive list of organizations, visit esbln.org, click on employer resources, then click on service providers.

The Eastern Shore Business Leadership Network (ES BLN), a committee of the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce, can save you valuable time by helping you sift through the resources as well as help take away some of that “unknown factor” of working with people with disabilities.

Not only do the above organizations have supported employment programs, many also do contractual work within their establishments, such as assembly of all types of products and materials. They also have “enclaves,” that work off-site. I have been in the business world a long time, and frankly, I never heard of “enclaves” until I entered the workforce world of disability contractual labor. Enclaves are basically contractual labor hired on your site-of-choice to do a particular job. Activities include landscaping, lawn care, brush clean-up, catering, janitorial, assembly, packaging, recycling, dietary, horticulture, and the list goes on. If you need something done, most likely, one of these groups can do it at a competitive rate.

One thing in the near future that you can do to find a potential employee is to participate in the upcoming Second Annual Job Fair coordinated by the Worcester County Developmental Center on Wednesday, March 28 at the Ocean Pines Library. This is a regional effort where Worcester, Wicomico and Somerset County service providers and businesses are invited to participate. For more information, contact Katie Clogg at 410.632.2382.