

ESBLN Eastern Shore Business Leadership Network
Putting Ability to Work www.esbln.org

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 upper shore of the Delmarva Peninsula, Bayside Community Network, Inc. (baysidenetwork.org), Susquehanna Workforce Network (swnetwork.org), Chesapeake Center, Inc. (chesapeakecenter.org), The Benedictine Open Community (benschool.org) and Chesterwye Center (410.827.7048) 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), associated with Chambers of Commerce on the peninsula, 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. There is no cost for our services.

Many of the above organizations also do contractual work within their establishments or form “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. Services include landscaping, lawn care, screen printing, catering, janitorial, assembly, packaging, recycling, florist services, and the list goes on. If you need something done, most likely, one of these groups can do it at a competitive rate.

Bayside Community Network took a complicated job that they were not sure if their workers could do but committed to it, knowing the staff could do it as a back-up plan. It turned out that the staff had trouble with the work but the workers were the ones that figured out how to get it done!

KSI Kent-Sussex Industries, Inc. (ksiinc.org) located in Milford, DE has an abundance of similar services serving the shore including re-manufacturing toner cartridges.

The possibilities of success are endless if you only give people with disabilities a chance.

07 March sources PWDs