



# Eastern Shore Business Leadership Network

Partnering with Eastern Shore of Maryland Chambers of Commerce

Winter 06/07

## Putting Ability to Work

### JACKIE GAST, DIRECTOR



Good things are happening with good momentum. We recently **recognized local businesses** for their commitment to employing people with disabilities. Our **Accessible Wicomico** guide which includes businesses with wireless internet access has been distributed and posted on the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce web site. We have initiated **Ability Matters**, a potential training program that is flexible depending upon the needs of employers. More information on the early stages of this initiative is in an article in this newsletter. We are once again updating our **web site** for a more localized feel and are searching for stories from you about disability employment issues – good as well as not so good. We are revamping our **advisory board** to consist of almost all employers. We have and are assisting area businesses in **disability interviewing techniques and etiquette**. As a result of our contacts and networking with the Eastern Shore Society for Human Resource Management, another **person with a disability is now gainfully employed**. We have been advising a businessman in Hartford County on establishing a Business Leadership Network in his area. We hosted a **First Line Counselors** meeting to encourage the many groups that serve people with disabilities to work together. And lastly, we continue to write a **monthly article on disability issues** that appear up and down the Eastern Shore. Please contact me using any of the methods at the bottom of the page with info to keep our momentum going!



It's true. Good things are happening towards the elimination of discrimination of employment of people with disabilities. Unfortunately, there is quite a bit more to do. Changing engrained perceptions is difficult. That is why we need you to speak up to those business people that may not yet have experienced the benefits of low recruitment costs, higher retention rates and stronger work ethic.



### Upcoming Dates

- Jan. 9** ESBLN Advisory Board 10:00 A.M.
- Feb 27** ES SHRM – topic: ODEP/SHRM partnership and the ESBLN
- April TBA** Workplace Disability Etiquette Seminar
- May 24** ESBLN Advisory Board 9:00 A.M.
- Sept TBA** ESBLN Advisory Board 9:00 A.M.
- October** Disability Employment Awareness Month
- Nov TBA** 2007 "Putting Ability to Work" Award

### SUCCESSFULLY AND GAINFULLY EMPLOYED

Through the power of networking, Sandy Grim, president of Atlantic HR Connection, recently contacted the ESBLN in regards to an employment need of one of her clients located in Salisbury. Her client, in order to reduce insurance costs, needed to hire several part-time security guards. In many cases, part-time work is well suited for people with disabilities. The ESBLN distributed the request to the many service providers in the area. Cedrick Rashaw with the Division of Rehabilitation Services connected us to Steve Bullock, a special education teacher at Wicomico High School. Steve works very hard to place his students in competitive employment. He had a student who was interested in the position who is currently enrolled in the criminal justice program at Wor-Wic Community College. The student applied for the position and was hired. As a result, we were able to fill one of the positions at no charge to the client. In addition, the chances of a successful placement is higher than for most because of the strong support system for people with disabilities. As an ending note, the name of the business and new employee has intentionally not been provided to preserve confidentiality.

### K&L MICROWAVE, INC. RECEIVES ESBLN "PUTTING ABILITY TO WORK" AWARD

On November 16, the first ESBLN "Putting Ability to Work" Award was presented to K&L Microwave of Salisbury, MD. Not only has K&L Microwave employed people



with disabilities for over 25 years, their recruitment, training and retention strategy is Ability based. Robin Hall, Senior HR Manager at K&L, has been a part of numerous events that promote the recruitment of people with disabilities at the national, state and local levels. Accepting the award was Don Hoeler, General Manager of K&L Microwave. The award was transparent acrylic signifying the ability of the winner to see past the disability of their workers and instead see Ability.

### Work Matters

Did you see Robin Hall on TV? She's in a Maryland Department of Disabilities sponsored commercial promoting employment of people with disabilities! It's been seen during *The Ellen Degeneres Show!* Look for "Work Matters."



## SALISBURY UNIVERSITY RECOGNIZED

In addition to the award, we recognized two departments at Salisbury University for their years of employing people with disabilities. Dale Kovalik, University Dining Services and Becky Rosing-Johnson, Horticulture Department accepted these Certificates of Recognition for SU for their Ability to see the Ability in people with disAbilities. Congratulations to Salisbury University and thank you for your commitment to the employment of people with disabilities.



## ABILITY MATTERS

On the Lower Shore, microwave companies are prevalent. Their business is in cellular communications, not household appliances, where soldering technicians are needed to assemble electronic boards. Maria Waller, owner of Quality Staffing Services (QSS), instituted a soldering training program to increase the pool of skilled solderers. At the request of the ESBLN, Ms. Waller hosted ten disability service providers to whom she demonstrated the soldering process. Many times, people with cognitive disabilities are capable in high quality, detailed, repetitive work. The purpose of this demo was for the providers to look at the process to see if it was something their clients might be able to perform. From that meeting, five to six individuals have been identified as having possible interests. As of this writing, job candidates are preparing their profiles to *Ability Matters-Soldering*.



*It can take 30-60 seconds for his brain to receive basic information, process, and then to respond. By the age of 30, despite years of trying, Anthony had never been able to keep a job in the community. Anthony's preferred community work was (and is) dishwashing. In November of 2001, the vocational coordinator working with Anthony assisted him in completing an application for a part-time dish washing job available at William Hill Gardens (which at that time had just opened). Five years later, Anthony is still employed, and is frequently called upon to fill in for his vacationing co-workers. What is different about this job at William Hill Gardens that helped him be successful when historically he had met with failure? The only difference was and is the staff at William Hill Gardens. Often employers have stigmatized perceptions that label individuals with developmental disabilities as being "stupid" "lazy" "weird" or "unappreciative". Just as bad, employers often resort to sentimental attitudes, "feeling sorry" for those with developmental disabilities, thereby treating them with lowered expectations and standards. It has been and continues to be, the people he works with who have been the one factor that has supported Anthony's success. Anthony already came with skills; with motivation to work and succeed... a bit of humanity was the missing ingredient.*

*Greeting Anthony as an equal, WHG staff has given him the gift of the same expectations and standards that other employees are due, with minor modifications made to accommodate his disability. Anthony has reciprocated a gift...his loyalty to the company and to staff and the development of authentic relationships with the people he works with.*

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## TALBOT COUNTY NEWS

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### WILLIAM HILL GARDENS HONORED

In October, the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce held their Awards Dinner. A new award, **The Disability Friendly Business Award** went to William Hill Gardens of Easton, MD at Talbot County Chamber of Commerce Awards Dinner. The ESBLN assisted the **Talbot County disAbility Coalition** in developing the criteria for the award. The testimonial from The Benedictine Open Community in Ridgely, MD written by Kelley Malone says it best. *Five years ago, Tyra Wilmer in the Dietary Department at the Gardens, hired a gentleman from our program to work part-time as a dishwasher. Anthony (not his real name) has a diagnosis of Mental Retardation. He graduated from Benedictine's school in 1992 at the age of 21. Unlike most of his peers, Anthony has had no family to provide the safety net of support most developmentally disabled adults benefit from. His disability causes a very slow cognitive processing effect, which results in long pauses when Anthony is spoken to.*

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### SCHOOL TO WORK

The **Disability Employment Transition Team** in Talbot County is a newly formed partnership between Talbot County Public Schools, the Dept. of Rehabilitative Services and the Developmental Disabilities Administration. Kara Morris and Paul Gancasz, co-founders, intentions are to provide improved communication among the agencies as well as combining resources to better serve students transitioning from school to work. What a great concept. Good Work and Good Luck!

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### FUTURE PLANS

The ESBLN territory covers the nine counties on the eastern shore of Maryland. Our plan for 2007 includes becoming more involved in the upper shore chambers of commerce beginning with Queen Anne's and Cecil Counties. Our services are free and we aspire to be the chosen business resource for disability employment concerns for all chambers in our area.

