



Employing Adults With Autism

Published: January 10th, 2017

Autism Speaks, New York Collaborates for Autism and Poses Family Foundation expand ADVICE to hire, train, and retain employees on the spectrum

From AUTISM SPEAKS

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NEW YORK (January 9, 2017) – To enable adults with autism to work and live as independently as possible, Autism Speaks, New York Collaborates for Autism (NYCA) and the Poses Family Foundation are expanding an innovative program to hire, train and retain employees on the autism spectrum. The partnership and the initiative, called Autism & Disability Visual Integration Company Experience (ADVICE), reflect the three organizations' commitment to promoting solutions across the spectrum and throughout the life span for people with autism and their families.

Autism spectrum disorder is characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 1 in 68 children is on the autism spectrum. Each year, an estimated 50,000 young people with autism transition into adulthood, bringing with them unique skills and challenges. The majority of adults on the spectrum are unemployed or underemployed.

To harness their potential, ADVICE connects national companies to local disability resources and service providers, such as job coaches and vocational programs that introduce the companies to job candidates. Those companies gain access to an untapped, diverse labor pool, along with expert support and training from ADVICE to help ensure a good match and an ongoing relationship.

ADVICE also helps companies develop long-term strategies and systems that create an autism-inclusive workplace. Services include on-the-job support, job modifications, accessing state and federal financial incentives, diversity training and retention strategies.

Staples, the leading supplier of business solutions, was one of the first companies to partner with ADVICE, in 2015. Cintas, a market leader in branded uniform and facility services, is another successful collaborator. ADVICE connected Cintas with a local disability resource in Franklin County, Ohio, and a promising job

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candidate in its career coaching program: Niles Dowe, 24, has autism, a high school degree and a solid work ethic. Cintas provided the right opportunity and hired him in 2015.

Dowe is now a napkin-press operator at the Cintas facility in Gahanna, Ohio, turning out crisp, custom-folded linens – and proudly calling himself “The Iron Man.” He is also responsible for alerting his department to safety issues such as accidents or near misses, through a system of red, yellow and green lights. “I really love working here,” he said, “because 99 percent of the time, the light is on green,” signaling a safe day. While some of his co-workers are aware of Dowe’s autism, he says they respect his differences.

At each site, ADVICE also trains professionals who visit other corporations to share their knowledge about employing job candidates with autism, so the impact of the program grows exponentially. Other nationally known companies are poised to join ADVICE in 2017.

Autism Speaks, New York Collaborates for Autism, the Poses Family Foundation and the ADVICE team are working together to ensure that candidates are considered for a full range of jobs, from part-time positions to upper management.

“We know that people with autism have a wide variety of interests and abilities,” said Lisa Goring, Autism Speaks chief program and marketing officer, “and it’s important that the opportunities available to them reflect that diversity.”

“Adults with autism are a rapidly growing segment of our society, and it is vital that they become empowered workers and engaged members of their communities,” said Ilene Lainer, president of New York Collaborates for Autism. “ADVICE’s practical, outcomes-based approach to employment training aligns perfectly with NYCA’s belief that people with autism can live productive lives to the best of their abilities.”

Collaborators on the initiative also include: James Emmett & Company, Global Disability Inclusion, Disability Solutions (national disability and inclusion consultants and lead partner with Staples), ViaQuest (lead partner with Cintas) and Advocations. For more information about ADVICE, please visit www.autism-advice.org.

About Autism

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. We now know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, and each person with autism can have unique strengths and challenges. Most are caused by a combination of genetic and environmental influences, and many are accompanied by medical issues such as GI disorders, seizures and sleep disturbances. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 1 in 68 children is on the autism spectrum.

About Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. We do this through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of autism spectrum disorder; and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions. We empower people with autism and their families with resources, online tools and information covering the life span. Go to AutismSpeaks.org to learn more, donate or join a fundraising walk.

About New York Collaborates for Autism

New York Collaborates for Autism (NYCA) is a non-profit organization that strategically designs and launches innovative, one-of-a-kind programs to improve the lives of people living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Using an entrepreneurial approach, NYCA seeks to transform the current landscape of autism services and challenge the status quo by creating programs and opportunities that empower people with ASD to live fulfilling and joyful lives. NYCA collaborates with national thought leaders, partners with leading community-based organizations, provides tactical expertise and critical early-stage management, and raises vital seed money. NYCA sees the possibilities and creates the path.

About the Poses Family Foundation

The Poses Family Foundation (PFF) is a New York City-based philanthropic foundation founded by Nancy and Fred Poses. With interests in five areas, PFF puts its greatest focus on learning and attention issues. To create long-term, scalable impact, PFF provides strategic analysis, pro bono advising, incubation of large-scale initiatives and multi-year funding. Believing in the power of collaboration to drive greater and faster progress, PFF works together with other foundations and nonprofits to encourage cross-field thinking and collective action. Disciplined and mission-driven for big impact, PFF is also nimble enough to act fast and support smaller “passion projects” with unique potential.