

Businesses recognized for integrating employees with disabilities into their workforce

Sitting in a spacious corner office, surrounded by stacks of letters, Jocelyn works diligently to process the mail. Jocelyn was the answer Systems Design needed: a part-time staffer to help the business process large amounts of returned mail.

Several months ago, Systems Design in Poulsbo contacted Trillium Employment Services, a nonprofit that helps businesses recruit and train employees with disabilities to fill their niche labor positions.

Systems Design is among 60-plus businesses in Kitsap that have made a values-based business decision to hire an employee with a developmental disability. National Disability Employment Awareness Month was marked in October, giving all businesses an opportunity to consider how they can strengthen their workforces by including people with diverse abilities.

Trillium is a local nonprofit organization with over 30 years of experience assisting employers with hiring qualified workers. Our employment consultants work with local businesses, learning about job positions and business needs. Once a qualified candidate is selected, Trillium assists with hiring the employee, with consultants assisting in the interview process and completing new hire paperwork.

Trillium staff also sets up transportation and any other necessary accommodations, and assist with training the new employee. Consultants provide innovative and individualized training to ensure the success of the person in his or her job.

Last year Trillium started a new program recognizing businesses that best represented what the company sought to achieve: working environments successfully integrating employees both with and without disabilities. Trillium consultants each chose one business they worked with, and those employers were presented with a plaque thanking them for their efforts.



Jocelyn sorts mail with co-workers at Systems Design, a Poulsbo business where she found a job through Trillium Employment Services.

Some of the businesses that Trillium has recognized this year are That One Place restaurant in Port Orchard, Bremerton Bar and Grill, the Pepsi Cola warehouse in Bremerton, the Boat Shed café in Bremerton, and Hop Jacks restaurant in Silverdale.

The Trillium staff's goal is to make hiring a new employee as easy a transition as possible for a business. Consultants support both the employers and new employees, and work to find a new staff member who fits into the workplace flow.

Adam Winterowd, the kitchen manager at Bremerton Bar and Grill who worked with a Trillium client, said "In terms of training, I have had to adapt very little and Trillium was there to support us. All people are different, and effective management requires adaptability in terms of providing each employee with the tools needed to perform efficiently and effectively at their job."

For more information about how to integrate your workplace, contact Trillium through the website www.trillium.org, or call program manager Heidi Scheibner at 360-698-6659.