

## Employment service nonprofit to open new Puyallup office

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Published: 01/20/15

In late February or early March, Trillium Employment Services will open a new Pierce County office, but its mission to connect individuals with disabilities to employers wishing to diversify their workforce will remain the same.

The 2,400-square-foot office space is located at 400 S. Meridian in Puyallup, just a block south of Pioneer Park.

"We decided to move to Puyallup because of our relationship with the Puyallup School District," said Karen Williams, Trillium's assistant director.

The nonprofit has served Pierce County businesses since 2006.

One of Trillium's cornerstones is transitioning those with intellectual disabilities graduating from high school into the workforce. For years, Trillium has had a relationship with the district's advanced program, as well as similar programs in the Tacoma and Fife school districts. Trillium likewise serves King, Clark and Kitsap counties.

Within Pierce County alone in 2014, Trillium successfully placed six graduating seniors into jobs. These are niche labor jobs that are tailored to fit a specific need of an employer and that also fit the personality and work ethic of the employee, Williams said.

"We meet with a business to identify their workflow tasks," Williams explained. "It's about rethinking how to use their staff."

For many employers, a niche labor job that can be filled can often help the company with improving workflow efficiencies and implementing lean management.

Trillium works with an employer to identify their workflow needs, then goes back to the labor pool to see which candidate best fits that job. Williams said an environmental assessment of the workspace is made, as well as a safety audit. This ensures the chosen candidate fits the environment and that the workspace is safe.

Trillium helps the employer with training the employee and remains connected with the employer and employee throughout the employee's time with the business.

More and more companies today are focused on how to be more diverse and inclusive in their staffing, Williams said. She said the more diverse and inclusive a company is the more team moral increases.

Individuals with disabilities are also proven to be some of the hardest workers, she said.

"Someone who has the job likes the stability," Williams said. "They're a long-term employee."

Hiring people with disabilities saves on staff turnover costs, Williams said.

Bryan Ruff, a loan officer at Timberland Bank in Puyallup and sits on Trillium's board of directors, said the nonprofit does a good job of pre-screening candidates for employment.

"It's about getting someone the right job," Ruff said.

Ruff, who grew up in Puyallup and graduated from Puyallup High School, said this is a win-win for both employer and employee.

"I like the opportunity it creates for businesses and individuals," Ruff said. "I've been fortunate enough to see students I went to school with getting jobs locally. They want the opportunity to show they're part of the community. They don't take it for granted. It's exciting to see them out on the job."



Besides placing graduating seniors in employment, Trillium helps people with disabilities of all ages. Trillium works with nearly 60 businesses across Pierce County in industries such as retail, restaurant, office, warehouse and industrial. Trillium's fees are paid for with state funding, so services are provided to employers at no cost.

Since Trillium is a job producer, Williams said the nonprofit gets "huge bipartisan support" in Olympia. In Pierce County in 2014, 21 new businesses received services and there were 37 new job placements.

Employers interested in Trillium's services may call 253-735-1553 for a free consultation.