

NEWS OF JOBS

Adults With Disabilities Help Business Work

(NAPSA)—People with autism and other disabilities are valuable members of the workforce. But experts say they sometimes have difficulty securing employment because of accessibility and attitudinal barriers.

In fact, despite the majority of people with disabilities reporting that they want to work, a National Organization on Disability poll found that only three out of 10 adults with disabilities actually do. Given today's economy, it's more challenging than ever for people with disabilities to secure jobs.

Analysts say those numbers can leave both business and consumers at a loss, since adults with disabilities can add to the level of diversity in the workplace and help companies thrive—even in tough economic times.

"Too many businesses don't take the hiring risk; we embrace it," says Larree Renda from Safeway, a company that employs more than 10,000 adults with disabilities. "It's important to include people with disabilities in the workforce, providing opportunities for them to earn a living, become independent, be part of the team and take pride in a job well done."

This year, the grocery retailer topped the \$100 million mark for lifetime contributions to Easter Seals, a leading provider of services to people living with autism and other disabilities.

Reaching Out

So how can companies work to hire more people with disabilities? Experts say it helps to connect with organizations that provide job training and employment ser-



Easter Seals helped Hannah Lowther find her first job at Safeway in 1997—where she still works today.

vices to people with disabilities.

Also, in most cases, businesses only need to make simple workplace accommodations or provide minor assistive technology devices to be accessible to employees with disabilities.

Looking Forward

Demographic shifts over the next 30 years are expected to dramatically change the employment picture in the United States, possibly resulting in an unmet demand for workers in certain industries.

Indeed, as baby boomers retire, the Employment Policy Foundation estimates that 61 million current workers will leave the workforce. Experts say hiring people who have disabilities could help employers fill that void with skilled, motivated and loyal workers.

For more information, visit www.easterseals.com or call (800) 221-6827.