



CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

OPWDD Honors Businesses and Employees at Annual “Works for Me” Awards Ceremony

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Building on the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities’ (OPWDD’s) mission to help people with developmental disabilities live richer lives, five businesses and one school district are being honored today as winners of OPWDD’s annual *Works for Me* awards.

Works for Me awards are given annually to employers who recognize the abilities and contributions that individuals with developmental disabilities make to the workplace, and their commitment to diversifying their workforce by employing those individuals.

OPWDD Acting Commissioner Laurie Kelley said, “Employment is a major step toward accomplishing OPWDD’s ongoing efforts to achieve full community integration for the individuals we support. A diversified workforce works for everyone, and OPWDD is committed to ensuring that individuals with developmental disabilities are a growing part of New York State’s workforce.”

OPWDD took yet another step in its effort to increase the number of employment opportunities available to people with developmental disabilities on October 1, when the agency submitted its [draft employment plan](#) to increase competitive employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. The proposal lays out the ways OPWDD is seeking to increase and promote employment for the individuals we serve. More than 7,200 individuals with developmental disabilities are currently engaged in competitive employment in New York State, making at least minimum wage. OPWDD plans to increase that number by at least 10% in the coming year.

The OPWDD *Works for Me* event is held in October as part of [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#) (NDEAM). NDEAM is a national campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America’s workers with disabilities.

THE 2013 HONOREES ARE:

Small Business of the Year: [Paumanok Veterinary Hospital](#), Patchogue, NY

John Walko Goercke has been employed at Paumanok for six years now, working 22 hours a week and performing a variety of job duties.

Medium Business of the Year: [Mohawk Sign Systems](#), Amsterdam, NY

Brandi Fox has been employed part-time for seven years at Mohawk Sign in a unique position. She is responsible for proofreading all ADA compliant Braille signage.

Large Business of the Year: [Absolut Care of Aurora Park](#), East Aurora, NY

Jenny Trometer has been employed for five years at Absolut sharing her musical talents with the residents of the nursing home by singing and playing the piano twice a week. What’s even more impressive is that Jenny is also legally blind. Absolut Care’s workforce includes 10 employees with developmental disabilities.

Corporate Partner of the Year: [Rochester General Hospital](#), Rochester, NY

Terrell Peterson has been employed for almost two years at the hospital in food service and has steadily moved himself up the promotion ladder. He is working full-time, 40 hours per week, with benefits.

Government/Nonprofit of the Year: [Town of Plattsburgh Water and Wastewater Department](#)

Kyle Kourofsky has been employed for nearly two years and works full-time.

A college graduate, he started his employment with the Town of Plattsburgh as a participant in OPWDD's Employment Training Program and now is on the work crew at Water and Wastewater.

Youth Transition Award: [Rochester City School District](#), Rochester, NY

The district's Work Experience Program and Program Search work closely with OPWDD and the New York State Education Department's [Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation](#) (ACCES-VR) program to transition students from high school to employment. As of April 2013, 210 students were enrolled in the Work Experience Program at Edison Technical High School and all students have employment as a goal in their transition plans.

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