

A monthly E-News update for employers committed to creating opportunities for people with disabilities.

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The Marriott Way: Creating Employee and Customer Satisfaction

When guitarist Mark Perron and his wife grew tired of performing on the Los Angeles, Calif. entertainment circuit and spending nights in hotels, he went to work for one – Marriott International.

Six years later, Mark is a friendly, high-performing sales associate at the Marriott Global Customer Care & Reservation Sales Center in Santa Ana, Calif. His “Hollywood” star hangs on the center’s wall, flanked by those of other associates. It is the center’s way of recognizing outstanding staff performance and customer service.

Mark is blind, but the hundreds of callers he books hotel rooms for each day do not know. In fact, it was not until he accepted his award last December for Marriott Sales Associate of the Year that many external colleagues learned he was sight impaired.

Mark represents the 24 percent of the center’s staff who have a disability. He also reflects Marriott’s corporate philosophy of building a diverse workforce.

Sjaloom Stringer, the location’s general manager, said what Marriott does each day to accommodate, integrate and actively promote staff with disabilities in their workforce is the norm for them.

“If a person has the skills and talent to be promoted into a position, they can do it,” said Stringer.

Stringer and her team practice the company’s motto, “Take care of your associates and they will take care of our customers.”

At the Santa Ana location, guide dogs share cubicles with their owners; JAWS (Job Access with Speech), an adaptive software program, enables blind associates to work with the call center system; and Braille labels are affixed to microwaves. Many other creative strategies are also used daily.

The center began realizing the benefit of having a diverse workforce including people with disabilities when they hired their first blind associate in 1991. As a result, Kellie Perez, operations manager, initiated the center’s involvement in the Pathways to Independence training program, now used at other Marriott Global Customer Care & Reservation Sales Centers.

Are you interested in professional development opportunities this summer?

The first series of EARN networking seminars for HR professionals will wrap up in July. A **FREE** seminar will be held in Arlington, VA (Washington, DC metro area) on **July 28**. **This seminar is approved for 2.25 HRCI recertification credit hours.** Visit www.earnworks.com/seminars for complete details and to register to attend.

News from the U.S. DOL ...

On June 21, Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao announced the theme of October’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month – Workers with Disabilities: Ready for Tomorrow’s Jobs Today.

Secretary Chao said this year’s theme stresses people with disabilities are important to the fabric of the nation’s workforce and future economic success.

Celebrated each October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month provides an opportunity for U.S. businesses, citizens and organizations collectively to recognize the contributions people with disabilities bring to the workforce daily.

October also includes Disability Mentoring Day 2005, which will be held on October 19. Businesses are encouraged to invite a young job seeker with a disability to your workplace for a day of job shadowing.

To learn more and to find out how you can participate, contact the [American Association of People with Disabilities](http://www.americanassociationofpeoplewithdisabilities.org) at 1-800-840-8844 (V/TTY). Or, email [JT Taransky](mailto:JT.Taransky@AAPWD.org) or [Marie Campos](mailto:Marie.Campos@AAPWD.org).