



A BERGEN COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD success story

“If you’re considering hiring an individual with a disability, I would encourage it. Juan has been wonderful for us.”

*--Colleen Fondi
Distribution
Coordinator,
North Jersey Media
Group*

**Bergen County Workforce
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North Jersey Media Group Hires Disabled Worker, Encourages Others

The Bergen WIB has many strategic partners in the private and public sectors. The North Jersey Media Group (NJMG) and the North Jersey Friendship House are two of them. Both organizations have offices in Hackensack, and both demonstrate a common goal—to assist persons with disabilities on their path to wellness and recovery with the goal of improving their overall quality of life.

CHALLENGE

The North Jersey Media Group is an independent, family-owned media company providing local news, information, and services to the residents of northern New Jersey and is best known for its flagship daily newspaper, *The Record*. Recognizing the need to control newspaper debris littering the parking lot at its home delivery distribution center, NJMG sought a solution. For the past ten years or so, the solution has been a person with disabilities named Juan, who receives employment support from Friendship House—a non-profit rehabilitation center licensed by the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and approved by the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

ABOUT OUR BUSINESS SERVICES

The Bergen County Workforce Investment Board (Bergen WIB) is dedicated to supporting workforce development by connecting Bergen County residents to jobs and ensuring that employers have the skilled workers they need to grow, compete, and prosper. In cooperation with the Bergen WIB, the Business Resource Center (BRC) at the One-Stop Career Center reaches out to local businesses to assist with their human resource needs. Employers use the BRC to recruit and screen prospective employees and to find out about new business development, loan programs, and labor laws. Job placement is available through the Employment Services Division of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) on an individual basis for job matching, job development, and referrals to employers. Recruitment events are held to give job seekers access to employers eager to hire qualified workers.

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SOLUTION

Juan, a shy man in his forties, reports to work at the NJMG distribution center at 7:30 am, 6 days a week, arriving a couple of hours after the home delivery folks have loaded bundles of newspapers into their cars. In their haste to load up and leave, a lot of loose strapping and newspapers fall out of their cars and get blown all over the property. Although Juan is an epileptic with other physical challenges, he and his “grabber” have become critical members of the NJMG maintenance staff, ensuring that the parking lot is litter-free when he finishes his three-hour shift at 10:30 am.

RESULTS

Positive attitude: Juan’s morning shift at NJMG comes after a long night shift. Starting at midnight, he makes rounds, via bus, to clean up the parking lots of several 7-11 convenience stores. He brings his own broom, dustpan, grabber, and trash bags on the bus and keeps his own spreadsheet. “He’s given everybody a better perspective on dealing with individuals such as Juan,” said NJMG Distribution Coordinator Colleen Fondi. “He’s got a great sense of humor.”

Reliable worker: Having proven his reliability at the Hackensack location, Juan was hired to maintain the NJMG home delivery distribution center in Woodland Park as well.

Cost savings: “Who would we get to work three hours a day?” said Fondi. “It would mean extending a full-time person’s hours, which would greatly increase our costs.”

Long-term relationship: Juan has been working with the NJMG maintenance staff for about ten years: “We’re very happy with Juan,” said Fondi. “I know if we had another need, we would certainly consider Friendship House and hiring another person such as Juan.”