

Teamwork to Make the Dream Work

Michelle Novak – Community Liaison for Tradewinds

The relationship between the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Employment Specialist and the job seeker are important when it comes to finding successful employment. The support and encouragement on the road to a successful employment placement can make a positive impact for everyone involved. In this case, an Employment Specialist shares her perspective on the VR client and her determination to succeed after five years on the employment search.

I can easily say Destinee is at the top of my "favorite client" list! I wanted to share some feedback with all of you because I truly feel we have found the perfect fit for her after a long 5 years of having an open case with VR!

Ever since Destinee was assigned to work with me, it was important for me to get to know her personally, understand her goals and barriers and ultimately, earn her trust. In speaking with her VR Counselor, I knew her case had been open for a long time and I was determined to help. I was really motivated to work with her and find something where she can thrive. Destinee told me she wants an opportunity to show people that she's smart, valuable, and deserving of an opportunity. After meeting with management at HG Global, I took Destinee in on two different days so she could try working in different areas. She did amazing and they wanted her on board as an employee. I wish I could have had a camera those first couple days. It's wonderful to see her utilizing her skills, talent and most importantly, her persistence show her value. She just completed her first week of working at HG Global and has managed to accomplish the following:

- Learn a data entry software in less than 30 minutes of training and instruction. The supervisor stated the last 3 individuals she attempted to train couldn't get it down after a few days of training.
- She taught her coworkers "not judge a book by its cover". A lot of people are unaware or uneducated about the abilities people with disabilities have. A few people in the area where she works approached me and questioned her ability to do certain tasks. I told them to watch this girl because she is going to teach all of us a few things. And, she absolutely did! Her supervisor, Rose, immediately became her office advocate and treated her no different than anyone else. Rose immediately picked up on Destinee's independence and does a great job encouraging her and ensuring she is part of the team. She doesn't even realize that she has changed people's perception of "disability" which is so amazing to watch!
- She was quiet her first day but by the third day she walked in confidentially and said good morning to everyone. She and got herself settled at her desk, put her lunch in the break room and told me "go have a seat and work on your laptop, I will let you know if I need anything".

I'm blown away at her ability to adapt to change so quickly and I don't think she realizes the positive impact she's made on so many people in such a short time. I'm excited to see her grow and be successful there. Thank you to everyone for the persistence, flexibility, patience, and overall teamwork. She deserves every minute we have all invested and I am so very proud of her!

Destinee was featured in an article by The Times of Northwest Indiana

powered by THE TIMES



HG Global, TradeWinds partner in job search

Deborah Laverty Times Correspondent Aug 31, 2020 Aug 31, 2020

Michelle Novak, left, helped Destinee Smith in her job search



Quindell Williams has been hired as a warehouse associate.



Destinee Smith has been trying to find her dream job since graduating from Hobart High School in 2015.

The 24-year-old landed a job she loves about a month ago at HG Global in Portage with the help of TradeWinds employment services

"It's been the best job I have ever had. ... My disability won't stop me. They gave me a chance and all you need is a chance," Smith said.

Smith, who has mild/moderate cerebral palsy and is deaf, was hired as an order input specialist by HG Global. Quindell Williams, 18, also of Hobart, was hired as a warehouse associate.

Williams, a recent West Side High School graduate, was born developmentally delayed and didn't speak until he was 8, said Michelle Novak, community liaison for TradeWinds employment services.

Thomas Williams said his son loves working at HG Global where "he's grown so much, and his self-esteem has significantly improved."

"He comes home and talks about work and the friends he's made there. Choosing TradeWinds as his service provider was the best choice I could have made," Thomas Williams said.

Tracy Smith, Destinee Smith's mother, also speaks glowingly of the opportunities both TradeWinds and HG Global have given her daughter.

"It has been life-changing for my daughter. The job has meant so much for her self-esteem. ... You can tell by looking at my daughter that she has challenges, but she can shine if you just give her a shot. These people have given her a shot."

TradeWinds provides services for adults and children with disabilities and has for more than 50 years, Novak said.

"Our mission is serving people with special needs by empowering them to reach their full potential," she said.

One of her responsibilities is to foster relations with potential employers.

This new relationship with HG Global came from board member Mark Haney, Novak said.

"TradeWinds has influential board members that are truly invested in our mission. Mark Haney is one of those committed board members and is always looking for opportunities to connect our agency with opportunities. Mark was the liaison in the development of this partnership and without his involvement, this relationship that has changed the future path for two young adults wouldn't exist," Novak said.

Novak said TradeWinds has about 100-120 clients a year and all those clients are eligible and need services to find and retain employment.

"People with disabilities truly want to be included, share opinions, provide suggestions and see them implemented. That is what workplace inclusion is all about, Novak said.

HG Global is a third-generation, family-owned company from Northwest Indiana and a leading provider of candles, aromatherapy, and home decor under the Hosley's brands, according to a company spokeswoman.

"When we learned about the amazing work TradeWinds was doing with special needs adults in Northwest Indiana, we welcomed the opportunity to see if their clients could be a fit for our employment needs," said HG Global Chairman Piush Kumar.

"We have since had the distinct pleasure of not only adding two talented employees to our ranks, but also watching Destiny and Quindell bloom in our company's environment, spreading their joy to be working, along with their 'can-do' attitudes, with every member of the HG Global family."

https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/hg-global-tradewinds-partner-in-job-search/article_aa2801e9-c31c-5437-b9fe-6fe3f2322e55.html