

ACHIEVEMENTS



A quarterly newsletter published by Creative Achievements to support our mission: **Creating Solutions For Persons With Employment Challenges.**

OCTOBER IS DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

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This issue is full of timely information. Whether you are a client, a potential employer, or someone that just likes what we do, we welcome your comments and input.

Creative Achievements is committed to our mission of "providing opportunities to persons with employment challenges."

Expect. Employ. Empower. Have you done your part?

Held each October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (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. "Expect. Employ. Empower" is our 2014 theme.

NDEAM's roots go back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week."

We've made some strides since then, but obstacles remain. Supported employment—services for our clients with the greatest challenges, remains tough. Making these job carves for persons that don't exactly fit a job description is such a great opportunity for employers to save money and boost moral, but often, organizations are not open minded enough to consider these different kinds of opportunities.

At Creative Achievements, we are making employment at all levels happen through education and persistence.

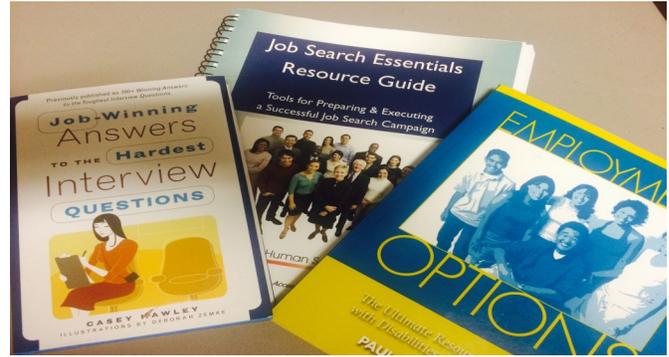
JUST THE FACTS:

- ◆ Worker's with disabilities have an 85% job retention after one year.
- ◆ Absenteeism typically drops, and productivity often increases for those hiring persons with disabilities.
- ◆ Studies on employers that have actively pursued recruiting persons with disabilities, show total employee turnover has dropped in double digits.
- ◆ An ongoing national survey of employers found that half of the accommodations provided were at no cost to the employer, with many employers identifying "changing a work schedule" as a no-cost accommodation.

Use your Resources!

One of the benefits of working with Creative Achievements, is that we're always on the lookout for resources to make the job search easier for our clients.

There's no way we can operate in a vacuum and be an expert on everything. So, we try to stay in touch with industry leaders to get ideas and tips to help your job search go more smoothly. We have these books and more in our resource library.



Working Your Plan on the Ticket To Work

As we continue to learn about the evolving Ticket To Work program, we try to pass information to our consumers. Here's information that you need to keep in mind:

- ◆ **Creative Achievements staff is here for the long haul.** Not only are we here to help you in the initial phases of employment, we are here to support you after you get the job, and as you work to advance your position.
- ◆ **Find a place to keep all of your pay stubs.** You may have to print these out if you get an automatic deposit. There are so many reasons to keep pay stubs that don't even involve Ticket to Work. Keep them for your taxes, keep them to make sure there isn't an issue at your job. For Ticket to Work, keep them so that you can make a copy, or scan them in order to send to us.
- ◆ **If you are on SSDI (disability),** you'll need to send copies of stubs in to your local Social Security Office. You'd think that Maximus (the program that administers Ticket to Work, would communicate with Social Security, but there are many cases that it doesn't happen.
- ◆ **If you're on SSI,** you need to call Social Security (1-800-772-1213) every month between the 1st and 6th days, to report your check information, for accuracy.

If you have overpayment issues, or you are getting letters from Social Security that don't make sense, our staff is here to help you decipher this information, and move towards a resolution. We occasionally accompany our clients to local Social Security offices to assist. That's part of our individualized service.

Pam Ryals—Our Model for Flexibility and Grit

Most who meet Pam Ryals remark that she is truly ‘one of a kind’. Pam is Creative Achievements’ bookkeeper, admin assistant, inventory control, purchase order watchdog and moral conscience. Several years ago, she came to Creative Achievements as a client, but after she was pursuing work again when a grant with The ARC ran out, we decided to hire her, despite her many medical issues.

Pam has a colorful background—30 years as a nurse, a bull rider, a commercial licensed truck driver that has covered the nation, a bartender and so much more.

When people sit down with Pam and learn of what she has experienced in life, it seems unbelievable.. Years ago, her husband was shot and killed, and shortly after she too was shot, but survived. Pam lost her only daughter to drugs a few years ago. After a third knee replacement a few years ago, she was robbed by her home health care nurse, and continues the fight to recover just a little

The good news is that many employers are realizing that hiring a person with a disability has community-wide benefits that extend far beyond one person. Its good for the company on many levels.

(Job Placement Training Report)



For Pam, she is a natural organizer, and is full of common sense. Her Catholic faith guides her strength. She understands the mission of our company, and is always seeking ways to make it better.

She got a certification in Quickbooks a few years ago, and has built on that skill. We use a program called “Log Me In”, so that Pam can work from home on days that she cannot walk well enough to get to her vehicle and drive.

Employees that think beyond their immediate job description are hard to find, but Pam does this on a regular basis.

of what was lost. Pam received a tax deferment on her property in 2006, due to her significant disability. After her loan was sold, the new lender has created havoc for her, because they made a mistake and paid the taxes. This has necessitated her getting a lawyer and fighting for her house, even though she’s never missed a payment.

You may wonder why in the world so many details about Pam’s misfortunes, have been shared. We feel that you won’t really understand our full story unless we do. That’s the powerful message here—despite catastrophic setbacks, her perseverance to try again is extraordinary.

Pam suffers from RSD, a neurological disorder that brings some excruciating pain. Often persons with RSD commit suicide when they are in Stage 4, because they just can’t handle the relentless shooting pain as the disease progresses to every part of the body.

When we talk to employers about flexibility and job carving, Pam is mentioned. How could we really prod employers to step out of their comfort zone if we’re not doing this ourselves?

So, we’re going to show you how its done. Its all about skill and flexibility.

She routinely calls our clients to make sure that things are going well on the job, and to make sure that small issues don’t become larger ones. Pam screens our Ticket to Work clients, and probably spends more time with them than many competitors. She seems to provide the wisdom that often comes with extra time to think things through.

Pam knows that several of us run around frazzled due to juggling so many things. She keeps us grounded, and on track. Sometimes that can get a little annoying for us, but it has saved us many times!

As her disease has progressed, we have continued to explore how to do things differently. But when you get down to it, that’s what all employers should do. We look at our staffs’ strengths and challenges, and decide how they can add value to our agency. We look at how they can pick up doing some of the things that never get done. We adjust. This is how we make more money and save money. That’s why employers need to think outside the box—it is beneficial for their bottom line.

So, in this National Disability Month, we salute Pam. She’s a model for other organizations that are a little afraid to take a chance on someone with a chronic condition. We have certainly reaped the rewards for taking this chance. She is family.

Who We Are

Creative Achievements is a private, 501-C3 non-profit organization dedicated to community employment for persons with a variety of disabilities. Together, we have placed hundreds of persons in individualized job settings ranging from 5-40 hours, based on the needs of our job seekers and employers. We are passionate, skilled, and serious about employment. We have a small Board of Directors, and operate with minimal administrative costs.

Goals for this newsletter:

- To applaud organizations that have hired our customers;
- To highlight some of the great work that our customers are doing;

- To **give tips** to job seekers that are able to get their own job;
- To educate employers about the benefits of thinking “outside the box” when it comes to non-traditional jobs, and job “carving” for our customers that have a tough time getting their own job;
- To **educate** persons about a specific disabilities;
- To report on current events that relate to employment for persons with disabilities.
- To let businesses know that even if they are not in a position to hire a client, they could always help us by **being on our list of places our clients can volunteer or “job sample”**. (You would be getting some

free labor with supervision, and in turn, we get a better idea of how our client performs in a community environment.” Contact us at (817)238-7802 for more details.

- To remind our former customers and other friends of Creative Achievements to **always be on the lookout for job openings!! You are our eyes and ears. If you give us a job lead that results in employment for one of our customers, we will pay you a finder's fee.**

