

The premier community resource for people with disabilities and their families

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Saratoga Bridges celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month
“Expect. Employ. Empower.”

In October, Saratoga Bridges is celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). First enacted in 1945, Congress passed a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week" to educate the American public about issues related to disability and employment. In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name. The goal of the month is to increase the public's awareness of the contributions and skills of American workers with disabilities. The 2014 NDEAM theme is "Expect. Employ. Empower."

"We all have a role to play in — and benefit to gain from — increasing opportunities for meaningful employment for people with disabilities," says Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy Kathy Martinez. "This year's theme encapsulates this in three powerful words. It conveys that advancing disability employment is about much more than just hiring. It's about creating a continuum of inclusion. And the first step on this continuum is expectation." Assistant Secretary Martinez's blog post can be read at -- <http://social.dol.gov/blog/building-inclusion>.

Saratoga Bridges welcomes this opportunity to be one of the 165 community rehabilitation agencies and private sector business partners to submit an individual for the William B. Joslin Award. They selected James (Jim) Ormsby as he was nominated for this people-centered recognition from New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID). The Award was established in 2004 by NYSID's Board of Directors to acknowledge Joslin who was a pioneer and leader in the field of disabilities. It recognizes excellent vocational performance and personal successes of people employed on NYSID preferred source contracts.

After being employed in various vocational settings, Jim returned to Saratoga Bridges in 2008 and has been working in the Fire-Bag™ component of Alpha Industries ever since. Jim has great sense of humor and can clearly communicate his wants and needs. Although he has had some challenges, Jim's rapport with staff continues to make a difference in his productivity. His increased positive social interactions have helped him become much more successful throughout the day. As

a result, Jim has been able to steadily improve his daily work output. He thoroughly enjoys processing and packaging kiln-dried firewood in a mesh bag. Even though the job is very physical, Jim keeps up a competitive pace with his co-workers. Everyone continues to encourage him to reach his full potential.

Background on NYSID:

For more than 35 years, NYSID – a not-for-profit member agency organization – has been meeting the purchasing needs of state and local government agencies while advancing employment for New Yorkers with disabilities. Under the legislatively-mandated New York State Preferred Source Program, NYSID acts as a "virtual storefront" for a statewide network of 165 community rehabilitation agencies and private sector business partners to employ skilled people with disabilities in production facilities and community-based jobs. Through more than 1,900 contracts that bring work to NYS communities, NYSID member agencies deliver quality goods and services at OGS-approved prices to fulfill individual government agency missions.

Background on Saratoga Bridges:

Saratoga Bridges has been providing the highest level of programs to people with developmental disabilities and their families for more than 55 years by promoting their abilities and achievements in every aspect of community life. As one of the largest private non-profit organizations in Saratoga County, they have been committed to ensuring that the individuals they serve are able to realize their goals, hopes and dreams as they work, shop, play, and volunteer while leading full, productive and contributing lives. This voluntary service provider believes that the care they give increases immeasurably the quality of life for every citizen. Saratoga Bridges' philosophy is that every day is full of possibilities!