

Career Development for People with Disabilities

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>> Welcome to Disabilities At Work Radio, where every week we explore issues, ideas, initiatives and innovations involving the employment of people with disabilities. We feature employers that go beyond compliance in supporting people with disabilities in the workplace and elsewhere. We bring you prominent members of the business community, service providers, government officials, researchers,

educators and people who successfully manage their disability and careers. Join us now for Disabilities At Work.

>> Ray Zardetto: Hello, I'm Ray Zardetto and welcome again to Disabilities At Work Radio here on the VoiceAmerica Business Network. Our program today is sponsored by the Kessler Foundation and also by the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services and we'll talk more about them later.

Today we're going to put the program focus on the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute in Edison, New Jersey. A facility that was opened in 1974 and it provides rehabilitation to both adults and children with disabilities and it covers a wide spectrum of specialties including stroke rehabilitation, and orthopedic programs, fitness, cardiac rehabilitations, women's health, pediatrics and brain injuries. And we have a number of folks from the -- from the institute with us here today. So let me introduce them first on our program today. Let me first welcome Harriet Findlay who is the director of the Vocational Rehabilitation Department at JFK. Also with us are Bert Kormann and Ellen Kurtz, both of whom are clinical supervisors at JFK.

Also joining us is Stephen Ogden, who has been a director -- procurement director -- for a couple of fortune 100

companies and a 2000 graduate of Columbia University's MBA program. And he currently serves as a member of the advisory board to the institute and we're going to get some interesting information from our guests today on a number of very specific initiatives that the JFK Institute is undertaking, but let me start, Harriet, with you. If you tell us first, how are you?

>> Harriet Findlay: I'm fine, thank you. How are you?

>> Ray Zardetto: Very good. Thank you. Thanks for joining us.

>> Harriet Findlay: Thank you for the opportunity.

>> Ray Zardetto: Would you tell us, first, how long you have been with the JFK Institute?

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, I have been here about for 32 years.

>> Ray Zardetto: Isn't that about the entire length of the institute's life?

>> Harriet Findlay: Just about, I was the only person at the department at that time. Now we have 18.

>> Ray Zardetto: If you can, give us a very encapsulated history of how it got from a one person operation, meaning you, to what it is today.

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, I guess it took a lot of hard work and creativity on the parts of many people. We developed many new programs along the way to meet the needs at the time, and we continue

to do so. We have our -- high school program, which was quite unique when we started it about 17, 18 years ago. And now we're serving about 43 school districts throughout the state. We have a clerical training program. And we have a laboratory assistant training program, and we serve adults as well as high school students. So, we're varied. We try to meet the needs of those people who want to work and can work and give guidance to them.

>> Ray Zardetto: What do you think was the single most important impetus in growing the JFK Institute from what it was when you started there to what it is today?

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, I think it is really important to get out into the community and let people know what you can provide to their clientele and to make -- I think our parents are our greatest sources of networking. They are satisfied with what we offer their sons and daughters and they speak on behalf of us. And I think that's our reward, is that they think so highly of us, that they recommend us service to other people.

>> Ray Zardetto: And so, you're directly involved with the vocational rehabilitation department at JFK. Can you give us a sense of where that fits into the overall institution there, and how large it is and specifically some of the things it does?

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, we're a community hospital as well as

a rehab facility. JFK Medical Center and JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute. The hospital has over 400 beds. The rehab center has about 100. We have the renowned neuroscience institute of New Jersey and have -- wonderful accomplishments in traumatic brain injury. We provide a continuum of services, from admission after injury, right through the independent living. Uh, we serve people who have orthopedic disabilities, amputations, strokes. So, it is a wide service base that we serve.

>> Ray Zardetto: I'm sorry. I was just going to ask, though, does the -- does the -- the vocational rehabilitation portion of it, that you're aligned with, did it have that many capabilities at the start, or did it have to grow, you know, piece by piece?

>> Harriet Findlay: Oh, it grew piece by piece.

>> Ray Zardetto: Yeah.

>> Harriet Findlay: Initially we only provided vocational evaluations and primarily to inpatients at that time. The average length they would stay was about 3 months. Now it is about 5 days. So, we don't serve inpatients hardly ever anymore because they are not here long enough.

>> Ray Zardetto: Yeah.

>> Harriet Findlay: So, our emphasis is on serving inpatients, now to serving primarily those people in the community and high schools.

>> Ray Zardetto: So I take it from what I read and from your description of it, that in addition to providing therapies and, and medical care and everything, there is also this sense of vocational training that is part of what you guys do?

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, it is what we do in this department only. We do a vocational evaluation to help define what the person's abilities, aptitude, interest, perceptions, dexterities; we look at all their independent living skills. We provide services in teaching them how to use the train and the bus. Learn how to drive; do budgeting, shopping, cooking, laundry, anything that will help them to live and work more independently in the community. We also have two training programs. Our professional Office skills training program, which teaches all of the Offices, 2007 Access -- or, PowerPoint, Excel, QuickBooks, and our laboratory assistant training program, which is a 15 week training program, which leads to entry level jobs in both the environment, in medicine, food industry. We had a 70% placement rate for our graduates of that program. And our business advisory board interface, that Stephen is a member of, has provided us with guidance and support for all of our programs over the years.

>> Ray Zardetto: I think it will be interesting to talk about those in just a moment. Just one other question about that, about the

general way that you go about this. The range of people that you help -- I assume, ranges from child to adults?

>> Harriet Findlay: Yes. In our -- in our facility, we have a school for children with autism and -- young children who have physical disabilities as well. So that's a separate school within our system. We, in the vocational rehab department, pick up the youngsters when they are old enough to have working papers. So, our youngest youngsters that we work with here are 14. We have two youngsters now who are 15 up through age 21. When the school systems are no longer responsible for providing transitioning services, and then it would become the responsibility of the state division of both rehab or the commission for the blind or -- and we also served veterans over the years. We're working very hard now to re-include them in our services.

>> Ray Zardetto: Okay. Let's, um -- I know there is some specific initiatives that we wanted to talk about, but before we do that, I'm interested in the dichotomy between the laboratory and the Office training programs that you have. Did you start them both at the same time? And have you been running them both for about the same amounts of time?

>> Harriet Findlay: No, actually the professional Office skills training program was started through a process with industry grants.

That's been in operation for about 25, almost 26 years.

>> Ray Zardetto: Right.

>> Harriet Findlay: And the newest program, the lab assistance training program, was started through a grant from the Kessler Foundation. We're replicating a program that was very successful in Long Island for many years. And they wanted to branch out into Jersey. We have a large pharmaceutical industry in New Jersey.

>> Ray Zardetto: Sure.

>> Harriet Findlay: So, they went to the state division of voc rehab and asked who in New Jersey could best replicate the program that they offer. And we were very fortunate to be chosen at that facility. That we thought of -- to be considered as the people who can best do the replication for it.

>> Ray Zardetto: Right.

>> Harriet Findlay: So, we were fortunate to get a grant. We built a beautiful laboratory with all of the best equipment. We hired staff. And we've, um - we've been through the grant years, which was about four or five years. And now, we run the program on a need for service basis. So people from the state division of voc rehab can refer clients to us for our lab assistant training program.

>> Ray Zardetto: Right. I was going to say, I think it is kind of, it is more intuitive to understand what kind of positions in an Office

training program. You know, you might prepare, you know, the students and adults for it, but probably less so on the laboratory side. What kind of jobs, um, do you get involved with in terms of training the students and the adults for the workplace when it comes to the laboratory side?

>> Harriet Findlay: Bert, are you there?

>> Bert Kormann: Yes. I'm here. I'd like to jump in on that. The lab assistant training program prepares individuals in a 15 week period of time. And they learn general laboratory operations. So, they learn the use of all of the typical equipment that you're going to find in most labs, be it medical, clinical, environmental, chemical or otherwise. When the students complete the training, which is quite an involved process, because we have individuals that have had a disability and -- they, they -- are usually not one of assigned backgrounds. We prepare them for entry level positions to work in laboratories. And some examples of those would be laboratory assistant, lab clerks, lab aides, couriers, specimen processors, accessioners. The list goes on and on, but that should give you a general idea of what our graduates are doing with their training.

>> Harriet Findlay: Bert, talk a little bit about the involvement of interface and how they review the progress and success of our students.

>> Ray Zardetto: Well, actually, let me hold that question off for a moment. Because we have to take a short break in the program, but we'll pick that up when we come back, all right? Very good. In addition to that, we will also talk about the career day options and the career development programs that the JFK Vocational Rehabilitation Department is involved in. They are very interesting. I think they are unique in some ways, and certainly worth spending some time on. So, stay with us. We will be right back. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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Welcome back.

>> Ray Zardetto: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio here on VoiceAmerica Business Network. One of our program sponsors today is the Kessler Foundation, which is dedicated to improving the lives

of the disabled through the rehabilitation research done by the Kessler Foundation Research Center and through the work of the Kessler Program Center, which helps prepare the disabled for the demands of the workplace.

Now, we'll get back to our program here. Bert, Harriet was just suggesting that you had a few more points that you wanted to make with regard to how the advisory council works, with regard to the training programs.

>> Bert Kormann: Okay. Our interface advisory board consists of currently ten representatives from a large variety of well-known and -- and established companies throughout New Jersey. Our training programs are not the ones that are exclusively benefiting from having an advisory board. I -- I do want to make a point that all the companies contribute to everything that the vocational rehabilitation department does at JFK.

For example, when our students complete our training programs, very often they will come into our advisory board meeting and present themselves to our board members. So, our board members actually get to know our students and make recommendations to them, be it a job lead at their company or recommendations for their résumés and such. The other thing and I say this, all of the rehabilitation and vocational programs nationwide; we cannot overstate the importance

of having a professional advisory group that helps us to guide us. They are our eyes and ears into the community. They are the ones that are in business every day. And they the ones that give us the pulse of what's going on in the business community today. So, they provide us with that kind of steering.

>> Ray Zardetto: Stephen, that's the advisory board that you sit on also, right?

>> Stephen Ogden: yes.

>> Ray Zardetto: From your point of view, how does the business community view this activity?

>> Stephen Ogden: I mean, it's something that is very valuable. It is something that I'm proud to be a part of. It is a great organization, a great program with great people. The benefits that they do for the local community as well as for the interface board members were actually, you know, get to be more in touch with what's happening. Get better awareness of things like assistive technology. Um, gain awareness around recent legislation and regulations around employment of people with disabilities. And, in the end, it is a great way to enrich the companies that we work for as well as our communities.

>> Ray Zardetto: Let's move on then. Bert, let's talk about a little bit about one of the events coming up. In fact, this month of April,

at the JFK Institute is, is -- aligned with very, very frequently. In fact, I think this is, I read, this is the 38th time you will be doing this career options --

>> Harriet Findlay: 28th Annual Career Options Day.

>> Ray Zardetto: 28th, that's very good. Do you want to describe that for a few minutes, what that's about? How it came about and what exactly happens there?

>> Bert Kormann: Yes, well, the etiology of it is Harriet began it 28 years ago. Uh, we bring together several different groups of people. It's a job fair format, but we don't call it a job fair. We call it career options. The three main components to career options day is that we invite local area employers, the ones who maybe hire -- individuals who, who attend this event. Many of them are our own clients from JFK Johnson Rehab, but it is open to the entire community and open to the general public as well. So, companies come in and make themselves available with job openings. They may recruit people, and uh -- but the idea behind the whole event is for them to be available for the guests to come in and talk and learn about what the career paths are at those companies. What kind of educational background that they may need.

The second part is the local service providers. We have a number of organizations that provide services to people with disabilities.

And the list goes on and on from, from -- from benefit issues to independent living issues, to -- the state division of vocational rehabilitation and so forth. They also make themselves available to all of our guests so that they can learn about the supports that are available so our guests can get and keep the jobs. And then the third group of people, obviously, is our guests. Most of them are individuals with disabilities. Uh, they are folks that come out to explore options for their future careers. They can meet with companies and learn about any job leads there. They can learn about services in the community. And they play a big role, because we also learn from them about what are the needs of the people in the community.

>> Ray Zardetto: Right.

>> Harriet Findlay: You know, we have -- we will have between 200 to 500 people come to our event every year. And we have school districts bring school bus loads of high school kids. We have folks who come by train and bus who try to network with the local transportation systems. We make sure that our material is Braille. So, we have guests come who are blind and enlarged for those visually impaired. And Ellen?

>> Ellen Kurtz: We have been able to secure -- the -- some, some sign language interpreters so that if they need one-on-one help to go

through the exhibits or if they want to participate in a review of their resume they can do that as well.

>> Harriet Findlay: So, we try to reach out to all populations and make it available at a level at which they can communicate and share and participate. This year we're also running one workshop; it is for high school students called life after school. So we're hoping that will have a big turnout for that program. It will be a combination of our interface board, people from the local independent living center, our graduates who have been successful on the job. It will be a panel presenting to high school students making them aware of what's out there for them and what to work hard to achieve.

>> Ray Zardetto: Now, the day of the career options is -- what is the date again?

>> Harriet Findlay: April 14th from 9:00 to 12:00 in the exhibit hall and from 12:00 to 1:00 for the workshop.

>> Ray Zardetto: And it is taking place where?

>> Harriet Findlay: At the JFK Conference and Fitness center, 70 James Street.

>> Ellen Kurtz: In Edison, New Jersey.

>> Harriet Findlay: Edison, New Jersey. Yes.

>> Ray Zardetto: Okay, if anyone wanted more information about attending or more information about career options day, what would

be the best way to do it at this point?

>> Harriet Findlay: They can call 732-321-7069 and ask for Roseanne. She can answer questions or defer the person on to someone who can.

>> Ray Zardetto: Okay.

>> Bert Kormann: And Ray, may I add just one more point? So the nature of this event, which hinges partly on companies participating, we would invite companies even to the last day. So, if this show is airing the day before the event. If there are any companies that might be interested in participating, we can fast track them into a table at the event. So -- we, we welcome all local area businesses to participate.

>> Ray Zardetto: All right. As long as we're on that point, why don't you, Bert, why don't you give us a one minute pitch, as to why a company would want to do this?

>> Bert Kormann: Great. Uh, the guests who come are expecting to learn, expecting to make a connection with a company to -- land a job. The overwhelming majority of our guests are highly motivated. Many of the ones that, that come and we know -- we know that they are quite motivated at their jobs. Very often people with disabilities have to work harder at what they do to make things work.

>> Harriet Findlay: Bert?

>> Bert Kormann: Yeah. Go ahead.

>> Harriet Findlay: I think the question was more along the line of why would industry want to come.

>> Ray Zardetto: Well, why would a business want to be there, too. I think you made some good points with regard to that, but I think some of what Bert is talking about also does apply to the interest of businesses as well. That there is such a motivated number of candidates who attend the show.

>> Harriet Findlay: And I think history shows that people with disabilities make excellent employees. They are really -- they are really they are dedicated, they want to work. Motivation level is so high. So -- I think somebody with a disability is a win win situation.

>> Ray Zardetto: Okay.

>> Bert Kormann: Expanding that to one more point, that actually our future projections for the availability of labor is that we're entering a period of a shortage of qualified labor force. So, individuals with disabilities are people next door to us. There are 54 million people in America that have a disability. So, they are a significant portion, and it's very positive for people with disabilities to see that, that companies are reaching out to them. It is good public relations, and its good business all around.

>> Harriet Findlay: I think statistics unfortunately show that 69%

of those people who want to work who have a disability are not employed. And that's a huge percentage of people. Very qualified people who can't work because no one will hire them.

>> Ray Zardetto: Stephen, from your point of view, from the business side looking at it; I suppose those companies who do participate in something like the career options day, usually come away feeling good about it, but why do you suppose that number is as high as Harriet mentioned?

>> Stephen Ogden: I mean, yeah. We -- I participated and actually, you know, with the company I have been with every year for a few years now. And really, you know, the companies -- I have seen a lot of, you know, highly professional people, highly motivated people. A number of folks that we brought in for interviews at the companies -- it's really a good way for companies to look at increasing the diversity in their applicant pool. So, really how to attract, I guess, different groups of folks to really improve the organizations and cultures at those companies.

>> Ray Zardetto: Right. Do you get the sense that there is any tide turning in the attitude of employers with regard to hiring people with disabilities?

>> Stephen Ogden: I actually have seen a change in the many years I've been on the board. Um, you know, I've seen companies reach out

more and more. A lot of companies, you know, really are -- you know -- they did look at and try to track a diverse applicant pool, but I've seen more and more emphasis on that. And I think with the increase in technology and -- and the Internet, I think they have tried to find other ways and new and innovative ways to try to increase that pool.

>> Harriet Findlay: I think today, with technology being such a popular thing, that it doesn't separate a person with a disability anymore. In years gone by, if you needed technology to do a job, it was different. It was something special that you needed that was costly. But today, technology is every place.

>> Ray Zardetto: All right. Good. We're going to hold it there for a minute and take another break. Then when we come back, we're going to talk to Ellen Kurtz for a little bit about the high school and the adult career development programs at the JFK Institute. And before we go, let me just acknowledge and thank Karasch and Associates and ASL Interpreter Referral Service for their generosity in making Disabilities At Work accessible to those with hearing loss.

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website. It's free and it provides additional information about many of the topics we discuss here on the radio program. The newsletter, by the way, is also a great source of information about the issues surrounding employment of people with disabilities. So check it out at disabilitiesatwork.org. And don't forget to follow us on Twitter, DisabilitiesAt is the address. And while you are at it, become one of the thousands of people worldwide who have connected with us on Facebook. So I hope you will do all that, and I hope you'll be back after this break when we return. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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Welcome back.

>> Ray Zardetto: And we are back on VoiceAmerica Business Network

and this is Disabilities At Work Radio. I'm Ray Zardetto. Today's show is sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services, part of the state of New Jersey's Division of Human Services. The New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services focuses on helping people who have become disabled as adults so they can live lives more independently in their communities.

Now, back to our discussion today with, Harriet Findlay, Bert Kormann, Ellen Kurtz and Stephen Ogden about the JFK Rehabilitation Institute and some of the programs that they sponsor and that they also fund. I would like to talk, if we can, for a few minutes with Ellen Kurtz. Ellen, two of the programs that JFK is apparently, very heavy involved in are career development programs, one aimed at high school students and one aimed at adults, is that correct?

>> Ellen Kurtz: That's right.

>> Ray Zardetto: Can you give us a little overview of each one?

>> Ellen Kurtz: Well, our high school program works with students from the ages of 14 or 15 until 21. And we help them to learn a little bit about themselves, a little bit about work and try to put those two -- two ideas together so that--

>> Ray Zardetto: Before you go on, when you say that you try to help them understand a little bit about themselves. What do you mean about that?

>> Ellen Kurtz: We give them vocational - they have vocational interest inventories, vocational ability tests and vocational aptitudes tests. We take their aptitudes, their abilities and of course, their interests, and try to help them come up with a vocational goal. We then -- we then take those ideas and help them to find a place to work. And now, the hospital is a microcosm of the world. So, in a hospital, there are all kinds of jobs. We take their interests and abilities and we then try to put those folks in jobs in the hospital.

And we're very fortunate at JFK to have a community that accepts our students in all sites, all around the hospital. You'll -- you'll find them wearing their red shirts and their khaki pants and they are very, very productive and they get paid for their activity. They work in places like -- they work in places like your -- your cafeteria and your laundry and they also work in the storeroom or in a business office, or in a financial office. They will work with our building services folks, work in our fitness center. We have several nursing homes and in the hospital, they will work in helping patients. They will work in our daycare facilities. The list goes on and on and on. This would go on in any community.

>> Ray Zardetto: Is this the high school program or is this both?

>> Ellen Kurtz: Well, it is both; they are analogous. It is the

time they are committed to the program. That they make the commitment to the program that is different. That is largely a decision made by their referral source. The school tends to send them for a year or two or more, summers included. They -- we replicate a real work experience. They get paid, they sign in, they're held accountable for the way that they look, the way that they act. If it doesn't work out, they get fired from that work site. We need to find them another one.

>> Ray Zardetto: How -- how would you gauge the students? The high school students have reacted to this program?

>> Ellen Kurtz: I think our high school students have found not only a career for themselves, but they find friends. In our occupational therapy part of the program, they learn all of the independent living skills. So, kids that are in their own communities are very isolated. But here, they're giving an opportunity to meet at the mall, go to the movies to do whatever anyone else does. And this is really not an opportunity that they have always had. So, in many ways it is much more than a work program, but it is a work program.

>> Ray Zardetto: How long has this program been going on?

>> Harriet Findlay: It is about 18, 20 years now that we have been running the program. It has grown a little at a time. Now we're really fortunate that we're getting a lot of referrals.

>> Ray Zardetto: Does the program also expand outside of the JFK institute as well?

>> Harriet Findlay: Yes. We're working in, again, through our interface board or businesses advisory board, each high school student is ready to graduate and move on, we try to establish a mentorship in the community for them. So, that, they are less supervised and more independent. So--

>> Ellen Kurtz: So they might be -- and hopefully, closer to their own community because have some students that could travel as far as an hour. So, we look in their own community for a mentorship that we pay. And, frankly, the -- the board, the interface board have provided many, many opportunities in their own work community or in their own home community for jobs for our students that later, hopefully, turn into paying jobs once they leave our program.

>> Ray Zardetto: What do you think has been the -- the single biggest challenge in this program for -- the one -- focused on the high school students and then the one focused on the adult students?

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, I think -- it has been difficult because it is rather a costly program and some school districts don't have the funds to pay for the service. And so sometimes the families have to go to great extremes in order to get what they need for their sons and daughters. So, I think that's been a challenge for the families.

You know, they know that the program is good. They want it for their sons and daughters; they have to convince the school system to refer them.

>> Ray Zardetto: For those who are actually in the program, what would you say is the biggest challenge in terms of the preparation and the training work they have to do?

>> Ellen Kurtz: Oh, they have to follow the rules. They have to follow the rules of work. For them, you know, most of them and their families, they never thought of their son or daughter of being a productive employee somewhere. So, this is new and certainly that something that most can measure up to. That is also a great success.

>> Harriet Findlay: I think that we also have to convince the families that their sons and daughters can work and will work and should work.

>> Ray Zardetto: That's -- I was going to ask that question. Do you find that sometimes that's a larger obstacle?

>> Ellen Kurtz: Well, that's our business, meeting the challenges and getting over them and below them and around them. So, yeah. The community also we need to convince because they are worth a chance, just like anybody else. They can do a job and they can do it well.

>> Ray Zardetto: Uh-huh. Stephen, I was wondering, as you hear this part of it; and again, looking at your role on the advisory board.

How do you recommend that a program like this approaches a business in terms of their consideration to hire, either one of the high school or the adult -- adults with disabilities?

>> Stephen Ogden: I mean, it is a great way just to get an introduction and get extra help at a company. Again, these are -- the adults are, often have a very good background and a lot of skills and are happy and willing to help out in a number of ways, any organization. So -- it is a, it is a good, easy way to get some extra help and support and give someone an opportunity at the same time. And the high school students, it is a lot of internships or other programs that companies have. It is a good way to get to know people and see if there is a good fit for that person later on. It is a low risk and easy way to do that. So, I've seen - and I have seen some of the high school students in internships and they are part of companies, and a lot of them really blossomed once they were there and created an environment in that group or department that was special.

>> Ray Zardetto: It would be interesting if you had any specific examples to relate along that line, of someone who really blossomed--

>> Stephen Ogden: Yeah, there was. There was someone who had an interest in working with children. So, we were able to facilitate her being a part of an on-site daycare center. And, you know, once

she was there, they, you know, they really, she really -- performed well. They really loved her there, the kids loved her there and upon graduation, they actually offered her a full time position at one of their other sites being a large corporate daycare provider.

>> Ellen Kurtz: And I want to say that was about eight years ago and she is still there.

>> Stephen Ogden: Yeah.

>> Ray Zardetto: Yeah, that's great.

>> Stephen Ogden: So that was one that sticks to me because I was more familiar with it. It is one of those successes that, you know, might not have ever happened without an internship or mentorship.

>> Ellen Kurtz: And that company many years later, last year, they went back and took someone else as an intern on that site. So, it has a way of reverberating also.

>> Ray Zardetto: Is there any particular kind of company or any particular kind of industry where this works better than others? Question for anybody?

>> Harriet Findlay: I think it is for anyone. Just like anyone else. We all have our interests and abilities and our aptitudes, and we want to explore all opportunities that are available. So, there is no one, you know, one industry. I mean, folk comes to us with all kinds of disabilities from physical to cognitive to

emotional, to you know, it could be any range or combination, visual, hearing, so--

>> Ellen Kurtz: And with all levels of experience. Some folks become sick or injured on the job, and they need to, you know, change their career, they ask, they think about things they never thought about before. So they get to change industries.

>> Harriet Findlay: That is primarily for our adults.

>> Ray Zardetto: Right. So, you're dealing with -- students and adults at many different levels and many different types of disabilities, and so I assume many different kinds of training is in order. I would like to explore that a little bit more when we come back, but we have to take one more break. So, when we come back, we will talk a little bit more about the particular training programs that makes sense for JFK and for the training programs that we just talked about here. So, stay with us. I'm Ray Zardetto. This is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> Ray Zardetto: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio here on the on the VoiceAmerica Business Network. And we're talking with Harriet Findlay, Bert Kormann, Ellen Kurtz and Stephen Ogden on behalf of the JFK Institute. It is actually the JFK Johnson Institute and, we were talking just before the last break about one specific example of a student who turned an internship into a very successful full time career at a daycare center and, Bert, I think there is another one that we just want to describe for a couple of minutes.

>> Bert Kormann: Sure. Thanks, Ray. You know, we have many, many success stories. Just one that I would like to bring to our listeners' attention, it starts out in a training program. We had a woman who was an adult and was unable to work in the field that she had been in before. Uh, she enrolled in one of our programs over at the institute, the, the -- career development program for adults.

She was working with Ellen, and Ellen saw that by her interests and aptitudes she would be a good candidate for the lab program. So, she got transferred there. Part of what happens in our lab program, like, like many of our other programs, is we don't only teach our students what they need to know on the job. We also prepare them for entry into new careers. They receive vocational counseling in all of our programs.

Uh, the one person that I had in mind participated very well and first caught the attention of an employer while still in training. Here's another example of how our interface advisory board plays a big role. During her training program, we have companies come in at a couple of intervals, and they do mock interviews with our students to help them prepare for the new twist of the interviews that they're going to be going through after their training. So, this woman met one of the folks who came in from a local diagnostics company. She graduated the program, and she was hired right away. They saw how good her training was. And she worked at that facility for approximately, oh, a year and a few months, and then an opportunity at another organization that we work with had a position that was basically one step-up. You know, had to have a year's experience. So the woman had applied.

We, we made our recommendations to her new employer. And she has

been employed there, and since has moved up yet again to a lead position as a laboratory assistant. So, one of the things that I wanted to highlight this story, because it doesn't just show that we help people to get their foot in the door, but that we will continue to work with folks and help them throughout their career paths.

>> Ray Zardetto: Okay, that's great. And we talked also just before the break about the fact that you are all dealing with either, you know, high school students and adults of varying ages, varying disabilities, varying capabilities how do you actually design the training programs that will work most effectively? I don't know, if someone wants to address that, we will start the discussion there.

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, I think one of the things that we're mandated to do is to look at growing industries. Because the state division of voc rehab generally pays for the training, wants to ensure that their money is well spent. So, we're always trying to find a new industry or a new field that we can develop a training program in. And we're at that point right now because it seems as though clerical work, because of technology today, is changing.

We're going to have to change what we teach in order to make the people more marketable. So, we're going to look again to industry to add to our business advisory board. What is the greatest demand that we can train our people in our clerical training program to make them

more marketable? So, that's where we are at now with that program.

>> Ray Zardetto: I'm curious, though, after the business advisory board suggests whatever it will in the case that you just brought up; do you then have to tailor the training program according to the age of the person or the disability of the person that's involved? How deep into that do you have to get?

>> Harriet Findlay: I don't think so; I think it is really a matter of what job is in the greatest demand. And then we try to help by providing technology and adaptation to make that person as marketable as they can be. As long as they can learn, and they are intelligent and they can contribute, we can provide the support that they might need.

>> Ellen Kurtz: It has to be a good fit on both sides. So the person has to have the abilities, and they then can't have any other restrictions. If they couldn't lift, then they couldn't lift, so we either try to work around that or try to help them find a job that they wouldn't have to lift.

>> Ray Zardetto: Stephen, I'm curious. Let's continue to discuss from your perspective, what do you think some are the, the new capabilities, the new skills that, that need to be, that people need to be trained on? Given -- where business is going here?

>> Stephen Ogden: Yeah, as technology is -- is changing the admin

clerical space. More and more people are sharing resources and doing things themselves. Information technology is a huge growing area. Um, it's not all being off shored. It's a lot of stuff is in the companies here. And many companies have many open positions. It is things in like website design, it is job and developers, it is QA testers for their I.T. area. So, that's one of the areas I have seen a tremendous amount of growth and a need for, uh, good qualified people.

>> Ray Zardetto: Uh-huh. And what areas do you think are kind of falling by the way side?

>> Stephen Ogden: It is that admin clerical. People -- managers are booking their own travel now. There is websites and other ways for them to do that. They are booking their own meetings. It is just, filing their own expense reports. So, there is still a need for that in companies, but whether it might have been one admin or clerical person for one or two people, they are often shared now by four or five. So, it is a big difference and there is not quite as many openings as there were before.

>> Ray Zardetto: Well, certainly a cascade of changes. And it never seems to stop. And, Harriet, I was wondering, we have a couple of minutes left on today's program. This would be an interesting question, I think, for you to answer, given that you have seen pretty

much the whole life-span of the JFK Institute. What, do you think, has been the single biggest change in the way, um, the communities at large deal with people with disabilities then versus now?

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, I think people are much more aware and receptive today. You know, we have an aging population. People are working longer, by desire, as well as by need. So, I think it is just -- a greater openness of thinking, regarding people with disability because we're all aging and we'll all have special needs along the way and we all want to contribute and do the best we can.

>> Ray Zardetto: Right. So, what is next for the JFK Institute at this point? Do you guys have anything interesting you're working on for the next few years?

>> Harriet Findlay: Well, we are at that point now where we have to start being more creative and thinking about new opportunities. So, we'll be picking our brains as well as the brains of interface, coming up with new challenges, developing new programs, getting them approved and then going out and doing our marketing, as we have done all of these years.

>> Ray Zardetto: Okay. I will help you a little bit with that now. Earlier we talked about how you could get more information about the career day options. For anybody looking more for information about the JFK Johnson Institute, what should they do?

>> Harriet Findlay: They can call our main number, 732-321-7000. They can ask for an administrator, either Anthony Cazzola or Scott Gebhardt -- or, go on the Internet -- we're at solarishs.org.

>> Ray Zardetto: All right, very good. I want to thank our guests' today -- Harriet Findlay, Bert Kormann, Ellen Kurtz and Stephen Ogden, for joining us and for filling us in on the great -- the great initiatives and achievements that the JFK Johnson Institute is currently enjoying. I also want to thank our sponsors, the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services. And, again, one more big thank you to Karasch and Associates and ASL Interpreter Referral Services for their generosity in making Disabilities At Work accessible to those with hearing loss. Thanks to them, transcripts of our program will be available on our website disabilitiesatwork.org a week following each episode. So thank you for being with us today, everyone. We will be on the air again next Wednesday at noon Eastern Time on the VoiceAmerica Business Network for another program. Until then, have a good week. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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