

## **Helping Qualified People with Disabilities Gain Employment**

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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 to Disabilities At Work Radio here on the VoiceAmerica Business

Network. Each week at noon Eastern Time Disabilities At Work explores issues, ideas, initiatives and innovations involving the workplace and people with disabilities, and we discuss these with the prominent members of the business, government and disabilities communities.

Disabilities At Work Radio is brought to you this week by two distinguished organizations, both dedicated to improving the lives of the disabled; the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services and we will talk a little more about both of these organizations later in the program.

Today's focus, today's show, is about a nonprofit organization called ACCSES NJ. It provides support to those members who serve persons with disabilities through a variety of community based programs located throughout the State of New Jersey and ACCSES NJ's work touches on more than 40,000 adults with disabilities across the state. But what I think ACCSES NJ does has application beyond just the State of New Jersey and why I think it will be an interesting show for today.

So let me, first, begin the program by introducing to you Nils Richardson, the president and CEO of ACCSES NJ, a position he has held for the better part of the past decade. Nils, welcome to the program.

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Glad to be here, Ray.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: We are glad to have you, thank for joining us. I'd like to start, if we could, with a quick snapshot of exactly

what ACCSES NJ does beyond the sort of top of the way explanation that I just gave.

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Okay. Well, we are an organization that is a little over 40 years old and made up of member provider organizations, as you mentioned, that provide a wide variety of services to people with disabilities. We concentrate, as would be appropriate for Disabilities At Work Radio, on jobs for people with disabilities and increasing those jobs and paychecks for New Jersey citizens with disabilities. And our organizations tend to place about 3,000 people a year into competitive employment in the community and sustain probably another 10,000 others in ongoing types of occupations; many times in their own social entrepreneurial businesses that we will talk about a little bit later.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And this is across the whole state?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: That's correct. All of the counties are represented by at least one agency and some of the more populated counties have a number of those organizations focusing usually on different types of disabilities.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And before we talk about some of the specific programs or some of the actual activities that ACCSES NJ does, I was wondering if you might just give us a brief description of what some of the member organizations are that you are affiliated with?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Well, we represent many arcs that provide

vocational services, programs, the two Goodwill's in the state, Easter Seals and a variety of other organizations that have work programs. Some of them include a whole range of services from very basic workshop activities to very sophisticated document imaging businesses and temporary staffing services. And all of them have programs employing jobs for people with disabilities and working with the business community to increase those jobs and wages.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm curious, I know that you have been in this position for, as I said, the better part of about ten years, but I know your experience goes, you know, deeper and beyond that. How did you get involved with this particular kind of work?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Well, I was attending graduate school at Yale and pursuing a master's degree in public health in the medical school there, and one of my professors wanted to do an evaluation of a vocational placement program back when community placement was just beginning to take hold in a stronger way about 40 years ago. And so I backed into that doing my master's thesis and they offered me a job there and I thought it would be neat while I finished my thesis to do that work and here it is 40 years later I have been involved in a variety of usually, similar to our other guests on the program, managing services within those organizations rather than doing the more general trade association and marketing piece that I have done here for the last ten years.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. As a matter of fact, let's talk about a

few of those services now when you go on your website and see description and details regarding those services. I know, for instance, that you are very active and your organization is very active in government affairs and providing liaison services with various government agencies and I do want to talk about that later. But I also saw some things on there that people might not immediately associate with the kind of work your organization does; for instance, sales and marketing. Why don't you talk a little bit about that, exactly what that is and what it does?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Well, our board this last year undertook a marketing program to broaden our awareness with a new brochure and we have continued to meet with the various representatives of referring departments in the state, as well as with the governor's cabinet, to help further jobs for the people with disabilities. And there is usually quite a bit of educational process every time we get a new administration as we currently have in New Jersey, because many of the individuals that come in with the new governor's and his cabinet wouldn't be as aware of the programs that are available to increase these jobs. And certainly our current governor has an approach of improving jobs for everyone, particularly people with disabilities, and we were -- and a couple of us were involving in a gathering over at the state museum for Disability Employment Awareness Month through October and the Lieutenant Governor attended.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And I also saw something on your site, I was

wondering if you could explain to us a little bit in more detail, the state use law?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Yes. We want to highlight that a little bit on this and schedule another program where we can go into that in greater depth. We have the honor of operating the Set-Aside program that provides not quite 4,000 jobs for people with disabilities in our state. And we have been able to advance those contracts from employing about 900 people at fairly basic activities to nearly 4,000 people this year at some fairly sophisticated jobs such as temporary staffing services, document imaging and armed security, data entry and so forth. And so that has been the source of, obviously, several thousand additional jobs and a lot of additional wages for people with disabilities. And we market the state to other government entities with cooperative purchasing program for this activity, and then subcontract those contracts to member agencies such as the three that will join us later on in the program.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And the state use law ties into this how, though, specifically?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Well, we have preferential purchasing, so that we get a little bit of a price break and a first right-of-refusal incentive to a lot of contracts that people with disabilities can perform. Because as you know, nationwide there is almost five times as much unemployment among people with disabilities as with the general population. And so this program

helps by having a preferential contracting program with the State of New Jersey and once something is on state contract, another government entity, such as the county or city authority, can simply quote that state contract and save a lot of time in bidding for something that has already been properly priced and quality studied.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Do you know if that state use law has -- or are there other states that have similar laws like that?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Yes, there are. Uh, many states have similar laws, not all, unfortunately, but most, and we work with a nationwide network of about 30 different states to cross-pollinate ideas and try to if something works in another area of the country, we try to figure out how that might apply to the great state of New Jersey. And we have been able to bring in several concepts from states around the country, particularly neighboring states here in the greater Northeast to provide these additional jobs for people with disabilities here in our state.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I was wondering if -- we have another minute or so to go here in this segment of the program -- if you might have a specific example of either how you, you know, offered an idea that another state took or how another state may have offered you an idea that you were able to run with.

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Well, we were able to bring in a couple of concepts from New York. One was DNA testing kits that are used here in our state and are assembled right here in Trenton by the

Arc Mercer. We were also able to bring in the concept of people with disabilities doing temporary staffing services and the two Goodwill's are our providers in that area, um, in this state.

From Connecticut, we borrowed Janet's Laundry Services where they have been able to partner with the state and others to do laundry. So those are three different examples and we have shared what we have been able to do in a couple of our programs, um, such as shredding and, um, document imaging with other states.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. Good. At this point we have to take a break in our program. When we come back we will be joined by colleagues -- colleagues, I'm sorry, we will be joined by colleagues of Nils who represent some of the, um, member organizations that we have alluded to so far in the broadcast. When we do bring them on we will talk a little bit about the relationship between a nonprofit organization like ACCSES NJ and state and local governments and how that relationship is best managed and best used. So I think it will be a very good discussion and we will continue it right after this break. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio here on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. The show is brought to you this week, as always, by the Kessler Foundation and the State of New Jersey's Division of Disabilities Services.

I'm Ray Zardetto and we have been speaking with Nils Richardson, President and CEO of ACCSES NJ. And I'd like to now welcome in some other distinguished guests. First, let me introduce Peggy Englebert, Chairwoman of ACCSES NJ and Executive Director of the Arc in Camden County, New Jersey, which is the county in the south central part of the state, right across the Delaware River from Philadelphia.

Let me also welcome Mark Boyd, President of Goodwill Industries for Southern New Jersey and Philadelphia. Goodwill, as many of you know, is a social enterprise not-for-profit organization corporation.

And let me also introduce Linda Carney, the president of Career Opportunity Development, which is an organization dedicated to motivating and inspiring people with disabilities to maximize their potential.

I should also mention that all three of our now joining guests are, have been, or will be chairs of ACCSES NJ. Peggy Englebert is chairwoman of ACCSES NJ right now. Linda Carney is a past chair. And Mark Boyd will be taking the position of the chair of ACCSES NJ beginning in January. So welcome, Peggy.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: Well, thank you, Ray. It's good to be here and I appreciate the opportunity to talk to this great subject.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: We appreciate having you here. Mark and Linda, also an equal welcome to both of you.

Um, all these organizations, by the way, are members of ACCSES NJ and so the discussion we are going to have today will still tie into some of what Nils and I talked about earlier.

I want to start the discussion in this segment to talk a little bit specific to some of the things that have happened here in New Jersey. For those of you not familiar with the political landscape here in New Jersey, last year New Jersey elected a new governor, a republican, his name is Chris Christy, and he came to the state capital of Trenton vowing to fulfill a campaign pledge to cut what was an almost overwhelmingly large budget deficit that the state has been running for a number of years, many years. And part of the cuts proposed by his administration would have substantially slashed programs that support jobs for people with disabilities.

So I'd like to, Peggy, maybe you can pick up the story from there in terms of how you dealt with the Christy administration

and then the other organizations to try to get that funding re-established.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: Certainly, Ray. Well, you know, it's really our duty to educate our government officials about the needs of the people that we serve and who are the citizens of this state. Incoming officials don't know the ins and outs of what people with disabilities need until we bring it to their attention and show them why it's important, both to the government and to the people that we serve.

So in this particular year as part of Christy's promise to slash costs in the State of New Jersey, he cut three million dollars from our workshop budget. Um, some of the money included transportation; there were cuts to employment services in general. And we had a very, very strong, if felt like an almost daily, attack almost to bring in members and to bring in family members and people that we served to educate not only the current administration, but our local officials as to what the effect that these cuts were going to have on the people that are in these programs.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: What do you think was the -- and Peggy, this is a question for you or anybody, but what do you think with the single most effective argument that you made that they heard, because you did get much of the funding restored.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: We did. And I think probably the single driver in this was the fact that they recognized that once the

people, um, were not able to attend programs on a daily basis, they were going to require other more expensive kinds of programs.

We run very efficient programs in our community facilities and we were able to demonstrate to them that the cost of some of the services that people were going to need, people with mental health issues, people with criminal backgrounds, um, people with developmental disabilities who would be sent home because we didn't have the funds any more to provide these services, were going to need much more expensive services.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: So the argument was essentially spend this little now so you don't have to spend more later?

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: I think that was a good part of it.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Uh-huh. Okay. And, too, let's see if Mark or Linda, if you want to get involved. I'm curious, in addition to what Peggy said in terms of your responsibility to educate the administration; I think Nils also mentioned that in the first segment too. What else would you say is an important component of the relationship between a nonprofit like yours and your relationship with a government organization?

>> MARK BOYD: Well, my belief is that we work in partnership with a variety of government agencies and, quite frankly, I don't think that the government does a lot of direct program delivery. They do a lot of counseling, they obviously help to fund programs, but when it comes to program delivery, it's the community rehabilitation programs represented by the three of us and the 37

other members of ACCSES NJ who have that direct day-to-day interaction with these people that we serve. So I think that's the beginning of a partnership between the community rehabilitation program and the government.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. Nils, I know you were mentioning earlier that the posture this year in terms of trying not to cut has been a little different from how it's been in past years. You want to talk a little bit about that?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Certainly. Well, I think probably the key component and it probably should be said declaratively, obviously private not-for-profit partners are key service providers to the state. Over the years state institutions have provided far less care and have contracted this to community organizations to provide this care, much less expensively in most cases, but unless a must more community based integrated organizations.

So really as Peggy indicated, if folks don't end up on the streets and back in institutions, they need the community provider partner to provide these jobs and paychecks and other community supports that keep people in, you know, a much more normal livelihood and a lot more of them in tax paying positions rather than expensive tax consuming positions.

And as we talked earlier, we have been able to grow not only our state Set-Aside program, but we were able to add about a 50 percent increase in funding for these jobs in the Department of Labor, both the center based programs and particularly the

community based programs out there where we were funding job retention services for less than a thousand people, and now we have got job retention services going for over three thousand people. And that's ending up in long term jobs with raises and often promotions for people that if it weren't for these job retentions services, um, those jobs would likely be lost. So we have -- we want to get back in growing these services and growing jobs as soon as the economy improves so that we can add to these positions rather than simply holding our own in a tough economy.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay. And one last question on this subject for any of you. Nils and I talked in the first segment about how organizations can share best practices or ideas across various states or whatever. Is there a discussion of how to deal with, how to relate to, how to work with government organizations, something that is part of that discussion when you are talking to counterparts in other states?

>> MARK BOYD: At Goodwill, there is 165 Goodwill's across North America and, you know, dealing with various government agencies and different types of funding opportunities. It's absolutely a very important component of our networking to make sure that we have a firm idea as to what various funding decision makers, what their hot buttons and what their priorities are. So --

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I would imagine it's got to be very challenging, because whatever the focus or the challenge maybe in New Jersey, I assume it would be or could be very different in Florida or

Vermont or whatever other states you might be involved with.

Would that be fair to say?

>> MARK BOYD: I think that's fair to say, but I think that, you know, I have not met a politician of either party, whether they are conservative or liberal who, you know, doesn't in the end, want to do the right thing by people with disabilities. It becomes a question of priorities; it becomes a question of how many resources are available. But, you know, everybody wants to do the right thing and so we really start off, I think, a lot of, no pun intended, goodwill right off the bat.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. Good. I think we will -- I'm sorry. Anybody else have any last comments they want to make with regard to this topic?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: Well, we are all members usually of national organizations. We belong to a couple of national organizations, one happens to be National Access, and another one, i-Neighbor. And in the past, I have been a part of Easter Seal networks nationwide. I mentioned earlier the network of state use organizations. So there are quite a few that we participate in and certainly we talk to, not only our state elective officials that represent the various districts here and come to Trenton, our state capital, but also the people who go to Congress in Washington. Um, so there is that continuity somewhat nationwide because often, policy in Washington sets the tone for what is done at the state level, particularly in the employment arena.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: Many of us are members of the National Rehabilitation Association also, which coordinates some of these efforts that Nils was speaking about as well.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. Good. Well, we will have to end this part of the discussion here. It's time to take another break.

When we return, we will spend the rest of the program talking about a very unique slate of programs offered by these organizations represented on the show here today. Programs that run the gamete from schools to welfare to prisons and they are very fascinating. So I invite everybody to please stay with us.

Before we go to the break, let me remind everyone that you are listening to Disabilities At Work Radio. And let me invite you all to join our team at DisabilitiesAt, and also to friend us on Facebook at Disabilities At Work Radio. So, I'm Ray Zardetto and we will be back in a moment. This is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> 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 Kessler Foundation which is dedicated to improving the lives of the disabled. It does so through the rehabilitation research done by the Kessler Foundation Research Center and through the work of the Kessler Program Center which prepares the disabled for the demands of the workplace. For more information please visit [www.kesslerinstitute.org](http://www.kesslerinstitute.org).

Also sponsoring our show today is the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services which is part of the State of New Jersey's Division of Human Services. And the Division of Disabilities Services focuses on helping people who have become disabled as adults so they can live more independently in their communities.

Disabilities At Work Radio thanks both the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services for their consideration in sponsoring this week's show.

We are going return to our discussion now. Let me start, Linda Carney, with you, please, and your organization, Career Opportunity Development. Why don't you just give us a quick overview of where you are located and what your organization does and then I'd like to talk about some of the unique initiatives, um, that your organization is working on, the Welfare to Work

program and then the one regarding prisoners. So why don't you give us a quick overview first of Career Opportunity Development?

>> LINDA CARNEY: Great. Thank you. Our company has been in existence for 40 years. And we are located about 15 minutes outside of Atlantic City, the southern end of New Jersey. And we provide the vocational and residential services for individuals with disabilities and disadvantages.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And one of the programs I noticed that you talk about on your website and I have seen on other websites as well is the Welfare to Work program. Can you talk a little bit about that?

>> LINDA CARNEY: Yes. Thank you. About 15 years ago, the individuals from the county approaches us based on the model that we were using in our outsource center to get individuals working and to help them to retain employment. They asked us if we would be willing to replicate that model for individuals transitioning from welfare to work. And we have been doing that, as I said before, for the past 15 years. Then a few years ago, the state adopted a new program called Early Employment Initiative, which is a proactive approach which gives us 30 days to do intensive job search to help divert individuals from the welfare roles, um, into employment. And that has been very successful for us. We have had 587 individuals that we have been able to place into employment in the last four years.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: How many? I'm sorry.

>> LINDA CARNEY: 587.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Okay.

>> LINDA CARNEY: And we have a -- in that specific program there is a 50 percent retention rate, we track it for a year.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Do you know how the retention rate compares to other programs?

>> LINDA CARNEY: I can tell you how it compares to our other programs.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Go ahead.

>> LINDA CARNEY: For the prisoner re-entry initiative, actually the early employment initiative is low, that retention rate is lower than for the prisoner re-entry by about ten percent, approximately. Across the state, I don't know the answer to that question, I'm sorry.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: It's okay. Alright. And in fact, you just mentioned the prisoner re-entry program, why don't you talk a little bit about more about that one too?

>> LINDA CARNEY: The prisoner re-entry program which is now called AREXO (phonetic), we have been receiving funding for that program for the past four years. And there are 20 programs throughout the nation. We are very thrilled to be able to be given the opportunity to have this population that are transitioning from either our county jail or from a prison facility through the Department Of Corrections.

And it is our goal, as it is the Department of Labor's too,

to get them employment. The secondary goal is to reduce recidivism. And one of the interesting things from our perspective is that in addition to a 63 percent long-term retention goal, the recidivism rate across -- I just pulled this this morning, the National Bureau of Justice for recidivism across the country is 67 percent. With the 675 people that came through our program, their recidivism rate for four years is 10 percent.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Only ten percent?

>> LINDA CARNEY: Only ten percent compared to 67 percent who recidivate back, you know, who continue to cycle back through the criminal justice facility.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: What would you attribute that success to?

>> LINDA CARNEY: I would contribute that success to providing individuals with support that help them to become independent. Many of the folks that we come into contact with that are either referred to us will come in as voluntary referrals haven't had the support. They don't have the background necessarily, they don't have the life skills, a lot of it is very basic. It's pretty easy sometimes for folks, and I don't want to say easy in this economy, but it's easier almost to get a job. Maintaining the job is what is really critical. And a lot of that has to do with communication skills and anger management and life skills and being able to navigate the expectations of an employer.

And if someone doesn't teach you that and you don't have a history of that in your family, it's very difficult for you to

know the protocols of getting and maintaining employment.

And the recidivism rate goes hand-in-hand. If you are working and you are able to provide for your family and you are able to get the supports and therefore supply supports to other people, then the chance of your recidivating back to the life that got you into prison or jail to begin with are minimized.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And I'm just curious, is there a particular profile in terms of what kind of prisoners are selected for this program?

>> LINDA CARNEY: No. They -- it's a voluntary program.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> LINDA CARNEY: We are very fortunate; actually last year we also got federal money, second chance money, to -- funding for mentors. And the mentors go in and work with the folks six months pre-release. So they are working, we train the mentors and they are working on many of the areas that we are then going to go forward with post release so that we can have a much more significant impact on those folks so they are prepared when they come out of jail or prison to go into the workforce and they have already established a relationship not only with our agency, but with a mentor and with many of the supports that they would be utilizing in the future after their incarceration.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: So you are in there six months before release. How long do you stay with them post release?

>> LINDA CARNEY: Minimally a year.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Minimally a year. Okay.

>> LINDA CARNEY: And we have a very large percent of folks that have been with us from the beginning and they still continue to come back that are now mentors for other people, that come back and speak at our, at our chat and choose or they come to our monthly meetings that are now mentors or role models for others.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright, Linda, thank you. Mark Boyd, in your position with Goodwill, I know that you are involved in a number of interesting programs, one of them being the School to Career program?

>> MARK BOYD: Yes.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I was wondering if you could describe that for us.

>> MARK BOYD: Sure. We call it School to Work; it's a partnership between Goodwill and the Kansas City Board of Education. And I think it's a unique program because this is a true partnership.

Um, the students who participate in this program, currently we have about 80 children who are enrolled in this program, all of them have an IEP, an individual education plan, many of them have some sort of identifiable disability. And it's been determined through their IEP that Camden City High School is not the appropriate place for them to receive their education. So they are bused from their home to our facility, a facility owned by Goodwill in Pennsauken, New Jersey. And during the course of

their day they spend half of their day receiving an education from teachers employed by the Board of Education and the second half of their day is spent working for Goodwill.

And we pay them minimum wage for two and a half hours a day. And they participate in various types of businesses that will operate, let's say, in a sheltered workshop environment, but we also do job shadowing. We take them into various businesses in the community to help them learn what it's like to work in different types of businesses and then when they graduate out of the program, then we are able to facilitate they're working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Division of Developmental Disabilities, whatever is appropriate, to help them move on to the next stage of their career.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'd be curious if, um, you can share with us a specific example of how one of these programs worked or if you have a specific example of someone who was able to take advantage of one of these programs.

>> MARK BOYD: We have had so many success stories that have come out of this program. You know, children who really needed a new opportunity to really get their education back on track given the barriers that they face in their lives. But we had one young man, his name was Marcus, he came to us, he worked really very hard and he went through the program. He graduated and we were able to place Marcus in a job at Wal-Mart and he has just been doing a phenomenal job. So I think it was just a great success story.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: How long total -- how long was Marcus in the program in total?

>> MARK BOYD: I don't remember, Ray. We have people in the program for, you know, three, four, sometimes five, years. They can start the program when they are 16 years old and they age out of the first chance education system when they are 21. So the maximum amount of time that someone could be in the program is five years, but we have had people in it for a shorter time, like two or three years. It really depends upon what their IEP recommends.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. Very good. Mark, thanks very much.

We need to take one more break. When we come back, there is still some more unique programs I want to have our guests discuss and describe, particularly Peggy Englebert and some of the training and placement work going on with the ARC in Camden County. So please stay with us. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities At Work Radio, and remember Disabilities At Work can be heard each Wednesday at noon Eastern Time on VoiceAmerica's Business Network.

We have one more segment to go through here with our guests and I'd like to turn the discussion now for a few minutes to Peggy Englebert and some of the initiatives that she is involved with

the ARC in Camden County that has to do with training and placement of some of their members.

So Peggy, why don't you describe to us, you know, at the base level first, what it is your program is doing and then we can talk about some specific examples.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: Okay, thanks, Ray. The ARC of Camden County has been operating for more than 50 years in this county. And our occupational training center serves with people with all types of disabilities, which is common to most of the community rehab providers.

As an ARC, all of our other programs serve people with developmental disabilities only, and we do residential services and something called adult training centers for people who are more profoundly and severely developmentally disabled.

But as a community rehab provider, we have services that all of us share in common that we provide through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and those are vocational evaluations, work adjustment training and then some other kind of training, skills training within our shops and job placement with follow along.

Now, vocational evaluation is a process through which a person determines what they are interested in and what kind of a job within that area of interest they would like to do. Work adjustment training is a process through which people work on those things that are barriers to them becoming employed. Many

people go directly into placement after they have identified what kind of work they would like to go to.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Let me stop you here a second. I'm just curious in the evaluation part of it, is this something that is done via a verbal discussion with someone, or is it a form they fill out or is it a combination of those? How is the evaluation actually done?

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: That's a great question. And there is a huge range of ways that we do this. We have specific instruments that we use that have been developed over 50, 60, a hundred years that some are paper and pencil tests, some are hands-on tests. There are interest tests that are specifically targeted for the folks that we serve. We evaluate how do people best learn? What kind of dexterities do they have?

We are going to look at the entire picture of a person as we help them to decide where best to go. But a lot of it includes discussion with the individual. What would you like to do? Where do you see yourself? The other piece of it is, what access do you have to your community? What kind of technology do you need to support you in your community? And what kind of support do you have on the ground in your living situation to help you with the job? So it's an extremely well-rounded kind of an evaluation that we do.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Do you find when you ask a question, you know, what kind of work do you want to do, do you find that most people

already have some idea, or are most of them kind of not sure?

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: I would have to say that it's about half and half. As a former vocational evaluator myself who has tested probably somewhere in the neighborhood of a thousand people, I would say that about half of the people know, have some idea of what they might like to do and the other half really rely on what we develop for them. The problem with a lot of the kids coming out of the school system for us is that for so many years they have had identified for them what they can't do.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: We need to change people's mindset to what they can do. That's what we are looking for.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. And how do you do that?

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: How do we do that?

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: Well, if a person wants a job, we help them find a job. We strongly believe that people don't have to prove that they are ready to find a job; they just need to be interested in being employed.

We have been very successful at finding jobs for folks who have historically been screened out of placement services because they have too many problematic issues. So the point is for us as professionals is to hone in on what skilled this person has. And then help to ameliorate all of the other issues that maybe getting in the way.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Mm-hmm.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: We focus on skills, not the difficulties that they may have to contend with. And really respect for the individual is the foundation of those placement efforts. Respect between the person who is working with them and the person looking for the job, um, it goes a long way in helping people to expose what those skills are.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And the programs that you undertake with the ARC in Camden County, I assume those are programs that are similar to ones run in other counties and probably in other states as well, right?

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: Yes. Exactly. I mean we all have our little specialty nooks, um, but, you know, in many ways we all work with the same group of people, people who are extremely diverse, socio economically, culturally, geographically, various disabilities, people who are offenders, people who are veterans, we have a remarkably similar base.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Very good. Is there a particular example of, um, some of the work that you have done with these programs? A particular person or a group of people that you could tell us about?

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: One of my favorite people to talk about is a gentleman named John who went into the neuro psychiatric institute when he was 15 years old and came out 45 years later when he was 60. And John was a very smart person, but since he had grown up

in an institution, his behavioral set was very institutionalized and his scope was very limited. And we evaluated John; John decided that he would like to go into a maintenance program. We trained him here, um, gave him maintenance skills, and placed him in a job.

One of the other side activities that we do here at the ARC is we have a self advocacy movement and John became the president of the self advocacy group. So he got a job, left our shop, we maintained him in that job.

And just as part of the story, one time I was taking a group of people up to a self advocacy meeting and he was describing his activities during the past week. And someone said to him, John, how is it that you get to do all these things? And he said, you know, now I am as free as a feather in the wind. And that just really speaks to what we do. We free people to do the best that we can, that they can.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And Peggy, if someone wanted to get a hold of you or your organization, what would be the best way to do that at this point?

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: Probably the best way is to call us, because there is always someone who answers the phone here. We are at 856-767-3650. We are also available on the web at [www.arccamden.org](http://www.arccamden.org). That's a-r-c-c-a-m-d-e-n.org.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And Mark Boyd, for Goodwill, same thing, is there some contact information that you would like to give us?

>> MARK BOYD: Sure, our website is [www.goodwillnj.org](http://www.goodwillnj.org). And our telephone number is 856-439-0200.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright, Linda Carney, for Career Opportunity Development.

>> LINDA CARNEY: Our phone number is area code 609-965-6871. And our web address is [www.njcodi.org](http://www.njcodi.org).

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. And Nils Richardson, how about for ACCSES NJ?

>> NILS RICHARDSON: For the statewide group, we can direct folks in these organizations as well as others, 609-392-1255, and extension 100 is our operator. And the web is [www.a-c-c-s-e-s-n-j.org](http://www.a-c-c-s-e-s-n-j.org).

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright, Very good. We have a couple of minutes left. I'd like to close out and this question is for anybody on the group here. Peggy mentioned a couple of minutes ago that a lot of the time what her organization winds up doing is talking to people with disabilities about what they can do because they spend a lot of time hearing what they can't do.

So I'm wondering, how do we change that reality? How do we get to the point to where what they hear is more positive and more encouraging than the negative and what they can't do kind of thing? How do we do that in a larger sense, not just within the framework of what you folks do in your organizations?

>> MARK BOYD: Well, I think with so many issues with dealing with people with disabilities, it really begins with that family. I

mean, the parents of a disabled child, they are already some of the best advocates in the world, but if they start making sure that the right messages come through, I think that's the place to begin.

>> LINDA CARNEY: I think very similar to what Mark and Peggy had said is that what we try and do is, and I think as a society we often the first thing that we almost tend to judge someone or look at, is their disability. And we really need to start intrinsically changing that around to looking at the ability that people have, not the disability.

>> PEGGY ENGLEBERT: And I think the other place that we start is with the people with disabilities themselves so that they know that they have skills and abilities and talents and strengths that they bring to the world and don't always hear that they can't read, they can't write, they can't whatever. So if people have their own -- if they are able to advocate for themselves, I think that is part of the best way possible to change the world.

>> NILS RICHARDSON: I would add that radio shows like this one that Kessler and the Division of Developmental Services, particularly the discoverability portion of that through the State Department of Human Services are things so that more and more people hear about, you know, people like the person Peggy talked about who were in an institution and now they are holding down jobs in the community, good paying jobs and even teaching others how to advocate for themselves.

I think that the possibilities, you know, the old picture is worth a thousand words or the story, I think that was something that we did not mention in our advocacy for funding and other programs is, um, many people who are employed in the services that took the time off work to go with us to talk to legislators and to come to legislative hearings and it really puts a face and illustration on how meaningful employment is for all of us, thankfully, but particularly those who have greater challenges in achieving and maintaining employment.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Alright. Very good. I think we have come to the end of our time allotment for the program today, which is disappointing because I thought this was a great discussion and very informative too. Let me thank, first of all, Nils Richardson, President and CEO of ACCSES NJ. Thank for joining us today, Nils. And also let me thank Peggy Englebert, Chairwoman of ACCSES NJ and also the executive director of the ARC in Camden County New Jersey. Mark Boyd, President of Goodwill Industries for Southern New Jersey and Philadelphia. Linda Carney, President of Career Opportunity Development. Thank you to one and all for joining us here today.

Let me also, again, thank this week's sponsors, the Kessler Institute and the New Jersey Division of Disabilities Services.

Next Wednesday at noon Eastern Time we will be back with another show exploring the ideas, innovations and initiatives involving the workplace and people with disabilities. Until then,

have a good week. I'm Ray Zardetto and this is Disabilities At Work Radio.

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