

# Disabilities At Work<sup>sm</sup>



NEWS RELEASE

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## **New National Program Encourages Consumers to ‘Back the Plaque’**

*Disabilities At Work* Acknowledges Businesses That Support People with Disabilities

**TRENTON, NJ (May 21, 2009)** – *Disabilities At Work*, a new national program, aims to acknowledge and reward businesses that support people with disabilities. Once endorsed by a service provider or similar entity, a business is granted the right to display the *Disabilities At Work* logo on websites, products, window decals and wall plaques. A concurrent consumer advocacy effort called ‘Back the Plaque’ will encourage people with disabilities, their families, friends and supporters, who control more than \$200 billion in annual disposable income, to patronize these businesses.

In partnership with the Kessler Foundation, a non-profit organization that supports people with disabilities, the program was created in an effort to harness this latent consumer power. “People with disabilities face many challenges,” explains Dana Egreczky, president of *Disabilities At Work*. “But they represent the single largest minority group in the American marketplace. That kind of spending power can make a big impact by rewarding businesses that support people with disabilities and encouraging those who don’t, to do so.

*Disabilities At Work* uses a unique logo that can be prominently displayed to identify businesses that support people with disabilities in any one of numerous ways, such as making special efforts to find and recruit qualified people with disabilities for available jobs; contributing to residential homes for adults with disabilities or children’s hospitals; or donating to research efforts that seek cures for disabling conditions.

**Consumers Play a Role in Making a Positive Change** Consumers can support the program by frequenting businesses displaying the logo or encouraging other local businesses to take action. Businesses cannot self-endorse into the *Disabilities At Work* program, but must be recommended or endorsed by a “Registered Agency,” that is, a service provider, government agency, Business Leadership Network, or non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the causes of the disability community. These organizations can become Disabilities At Work Registered Agencies at no cost.

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When endorsing a business, Registered Agents will be asked to follow certain basic criteria, but *Disabilities At Work* will rely on the commitment and integrity of Registered Agencies to ensure that the businesses they endorse deserve the designation.

#### **How Businesses Support the Disability Community**

Businesses that display the DAW logo earn the right to do so in any one of a number of ways appropriate for a particular business in a particular area or within its financial limitations. For example, other ways business can help might include:

- Make special efforts to recruit qualified people with disabilities for available jobs.
- Donate to non-profit organizations that employ numbers of people with disabilities,
- Include disabled-owned businesses on their approved vendor list,
- Contribute to non-profit organizations that support people with disabilities,
- Participate in national Disability Mentoring Day,
- Be an active member of a local Business Leadership Network, • Contribute to research that seeks to cure disabling conditions,
- Work with service providers, job coaches, and educational programs to make sure that teachers and trainers know what skills are necessary for available jobs, or
- Donate directly to the *Disabilities At Work* campaign according to a prescribed contributions requirement based on business size.

“Many businesses do a lot to support people with disabilities, but consumers who would like to thank those businesses with their patronage are often unable to identify them,” continues Egreczky. “We’re asking consumers to ‘Back the Plaque’ – the *Disabilities At Work* wall plaque – the visible symbol of a focused, ongoing campaign that will reward supportive businesses.” The consumer advocacy campaign website ([www.BackThePlaque.org](http://www.BackThePlaque.org)) provides free materials including ‘Thank You’ cards for businesses that display the *Disabilities At Work* logo and ‘Where’s Yours?’ cards for businesses that have not yet acquired the plaque.

During these difficult economic times, it is important for those who can to support people with disabilities in the workplace. Funding from federal and state programs targeting adults and children with disabilities are diminishing. In addition, reductions in personal wealth are leading to fewer contributions to non-profits that benefit people with disabilities. More than 30 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 64 have a disability. Of this number, only 18 million are currently employed.

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#### To Learn More

If you would like to learn more about becoming a *Disabilities At Work* business, a Registered Agency or a consumer that supports the program, log on to [DisabilitiesAtWork.org](http://DisabilitiesAtWork.org), or call Patty Cullinane, director, Business Development, at 908-975-3211. Follow us on Twitter, at [DisabilitiesAt](#), and on FaceBook at [Disabilities At Work](#).

#### About Disabilities At Work

Disabilities At Work is a national program, established and managed by the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation. The mission of the Foundation is to build a highly qualified workforce through innovative collaborations with K-12 education and the workforce training and preparation system.

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