

2015

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Writing
Contest



The 2015 NDEAM Writing Contest Writing Prompts:

- Why employers should hire people with disabilities
- Your personal story as a person with a disability, and what working means to you
- Any other topic you feel relates to the theme of National Disability Employment Awareness Month “My Disability is One Part of Who I Am.”

Submissions were accepted in the written form of personal short stories, essays, poetry, or other creative expressions. All work is original.

Hello,

I would like to sincerely thank all participants for your heartfelt submissions for the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Writing Contest. We were thrilled to receive more than 50 entries for all of our Peckham locations, across all of our different business lines.

This was our second year holding an NDEAM Writing Contest and we were so excited to see so many entries. The collection of writing in this book is simply amazing. I am so proud of this workforce, and all of the incredible talents, skills and powerful stories of overcoming barriers that clients have shared with us.

Peckham is successful because of your hard work and commitment to achieving your goals of independence and self-sufficiency. In honor of NDEAM, and the work that you do everyday, we salute you. Thank you for sharing your stories with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mitchell Tomlinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President & CEO, Peckham, Inc.

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Life Without Parole

By Chuck Smith

1st

At some point in our lives, most of us with a significant disability come to realize it is permanent. Each of us cope differently, but in lieu of medical breakthroughs, we all continue our struggle to live productive and fulfilling lives. We meet the challenges of our disabilities head on and seek solutions. Metaphorically speaking, we have a “Life Without Parole” sentence, but it is not a “Death” sentence. There are, however, complex problems, and we call on several resources to help us resolve them.

When a disabled individual applies for a job, it astounds me that many businesses often look at the disabilities and ignore the possibilities. We are productive members of the workforce, and we take pride in our accomplishments. Given proper accommodations, a disabled worker is as capable as anyone.

The sources of these problem solutions are various; self-initiative, family, friends, the medical field, and work accommodations to name a few. As individuals with disabilities, we accept accommodation when needed and support others when we can. This can be as simple as opening a door for someone in a wheel chair or as complicated as assisting in the clearing of an office during a fire. Some solutions are short ranged; like opening a door; while others are long ranged, such as picking up someone for work on a daily basis. Yes, in some instances we do need special accommodations, but everyone needs help at times, whether or not they

are disabled. Our needs are just a little more visual. At Peckham, we have been given accommodations and have proven our worth. We are productive and are a significant contributor to its workforce.

Whatever the challenge and however met, those of us with disabilities realize teamwork is an essential part of the solution. We are good working team members and definitely understand the benefit of teamwork. We appreciate assistance ourselves and often go out of our way to assist others, who are struggling. The fact that we are able to assist others fills us with pride.

Everyone knows change is inevitable, but those of us with disabilities have been forced to adapt and are able to do so, both in the work place and off the job. Our circumstances have made us masters at figuring out how best to incorporate change, and we bring these skills with us to the workplace.

Working at Peckham offers us not only financial stability, but also gives us a sense of community. Working here allows us to see ourselves as a meaningful contributor. Nothing builds one’s confidence more than knowing you can be counted on, you are needed, and you are contributing to the success of the company for whom you are working.

My disability does not define me; it is part of who I am.

I believe that Companies should hire people with disabilities for reasons that benefit both the employer and the employees. Having diversity in the workplace is important, it appeals to customers and potential employees. The employer gains insight on how to serve customers with disabilities as well as being an asset to the community. Employees gain a sense of self-worth and independence which will result in higher productivity and a higher retention rate. Having a disability can be discouraging to some people trying to enter the work force; I feel that if employing disabled people was part of the everyday norm, it would be less intimidating for individuals to go out and seek employment.

My personal disability is not a visible disability; that does not mean that it is not a daily struggle. Sometimes I think it's harder to have an "invisible" disability because people expect you to function just like everyone else. People can't see anxiety building inside they don't know when you're on the verge of a panic attack and it just takes one small thing to set you over or even bring you back from it. When people meet me I feel like they see a normal, everyday person that has a job and a family, they don't see the internal struggle, the constant second guessing and expecting the worse. I often have people ask me "what's wrong with you?" or "how can you work at Peckham?" As if I am not disabled enough because they can't see it. The more diverse a work place is with disabilities, the more people will understand the different types of disabilities and the more accepting people will be.

I am grateful to have a place like peckham to work at and to spread awareness about the challenges that people face every day. I hope that in the future it will be more common to find employers hiring people of all capacities. We all have a place in this world and we all deserve to make the most out of the life we are given and thanks to Peckham, I am doing just that.

By Amanda Centeno

Living with Anxiety

By Rebecca Lahr

3rd

When you have anxiety, it can stop you in your tracks. The world gets dark. Nothing matters anymore and the taunting thoughts in your head thunder loudly. The rest of the world is gone. You are huddled in a cocoon trying to escape the excruciating pain racing down your back. You cannot catch your breath. Your chest begins to tighten and you feel like you are drowning.

You must train your mind to release the negativity. To embrace the light and move to your happy place before the darkness consumes you whole. The golden thought is to not let the disability become who you are. You must repeat three good thoughts for every bad. Find the method that centers you and brings you back down from the high.

For me, I look at quotes on Google images. When the drama does not go away, I find quotes about envy, lust and greed. When I feel discouraged, I find quotes about hope, inspiration and love. If those do not work, I sing. I write poetry and doodle on the page. I get on my elliptical. If I am at home, I look at my son and am reminded that I am strong.

I am not my disease. I can get through anything and the thoughts are all in my head.

The attacks can last a few minutes, a few hours or can make me feel withdrawn for days. It can make you lose focus on what it is important. The important thing to remember: keep moving forward. Change your mind-set to make the attacks stay dormant. Create a routine for your mind does not have the opportunity to trigger an attack but allow your mind to be acceptable to change.

Do not let the anxiety stop you from pursuing the life you dream. Surround yourself with an amazing support system. Remember your coping methods and remember you are never truly alone.

The Woods

By Tamara Bos

**Best
Short Story**

I'm taking one step in front of the other and moving forward. My face is turned up to the glorious blue sky and my eyes are closed to better hear the bird song. My smile is wide as I feel joy for the simplicity of my path. My eyes open as I look around me and bask in the nature embracing me. The field my path cuts through is peaceful as a light breeze skims the tops of the grass. My heart bursts with happiness as a butterfly flutters across my way. I day dream about the freedom of the butterfly, once a mere caterpillar limited to its physique; then eventually transformed into flight with endless possibilities and the gift of floating on the wings of the wind.

I'm snapped back to reality with a chill that crawls up my spine, seeping into my now speeding heart and aching soul. I focus on what is ahead of me, fighting a forbidding surrounding me. The dark, lonely, cold woods are looming directly in front of me. I did not give it a second thought when it was so far ahead of me before. I feel that my end is waiting for me with in these woods. Its icy, black fingers of despair beckon to me. My breath catches with surprise and familiarity at once; I've come this way before but forgot how lonely, sad and dark the woods are. I spin around to flee from the darkness beating at my chest, catching in my throat. I look down at my feet and realize that even though I'm running, I'm going nowhere!

I look back in terror at the woods and the trees resemble dead, ghostly figures. Their limbs turning into spindly arms and claws, grabbing me and pulling me back to their despair. I panic and fight with all my might! But their grip is so tight and I become exhausted very quickly. I hear a soothing, yet sad voice whispering to me. At first I ignore it and with a burst of desperation try to fight again. I remember that I've been here before and I get lost in the dark woods for hours, days, and even weeks. I exhaust myself to the point that all I can now focus on is the whisper. The woods are all of a sudden not as threatening, the whispers are sweet sounding, full of safety and comfort. I feel a slip of uneasiness as I look back to the path that I am no longer on, and struggle just a bit in the direction of the light. But the woods grip me tighter and encourage me to relax, that I have earned a rest and that I should stay for a bit. They reassure me that it is ok to rest, that I've been working so hard, that I'm so tired and need to rest. I close my eyes slipping into the deep, endless embrace of the woods.

Best Poem

The deep insecurity and negative thinking has plagued me since I don't know when. It came to a head 17 years ago when depression hit hard--emotionally confused and alone:

all seemed dark.

I moved to Arizona.

Started a new profession.

Teaching. Struggled.

Struggled. Tried hard.

Appeared alright. It was not so.

Lost my job.

The negative thinking continued.

Moved to Denver.

Stayed with my sister.

Hospitalized again.

New light.

Understanding.

DBT worked to begin clearing the darkness, and for the first time in a long time, I felt myself.

I began to value my own emotions.

I began to dream, dreams that I never had.

Still unsteady, but determined I moved back to Phoenix to claim my life.

With the move came a new place—one of my own.

A new job—a place to work where the stress is low with friendly, helpful, and supportive supervisors and coworkers.

People, unlike my family, viewed me as a whole, not as broken as I had thought.

Steady.

Steady.

Steady.

I've grown to trust others and myself.

The veil has lifted, I am realizing: my disability is only one part of who I am.

By Donna Kurgan

Disabled but able

By Maudie Jean Gates

**Honorable
Mention**



Life's not fair, some people say,
Why me? Why was I born this way?
It's not my fault, I'm not to blame
Why should I hand my head in shame?

Have you ever seen people gawk?
And laugh and scorn and sometimes mock?
Have they never been taught,
Some people walk a different walk?

Maybe we walk to a different tune
Maybe we are a little late to bloom
Maybe we beat a different drum,
But think of what we can become!

Maybe out clock is out of tick
Maybe our wall is missing a brick
Sometimes our brains just don't click
We still need jobs, please make it quick!

Have you had your eyes to burn
Just because it's hard to learn?
No place to go, no place to turn
Your heart does ache, your stomach churn

Have you ever felt despair
Wondering if anyone else could care?
Give someone else a chance to share
What they can do and their burdens bare.

That's how it feels to be disabled,
Put on a shelf, shoved under a table
Just because we wear this label,
Does not mean that we're not able

Not having a job makes shudder,
I could be homeless, live life in a gutter.
I don't mean to stammer, I don't mean to
stutter,
I just want to earn my bread and butter!

I may not be what others expect,
But to have a job give me respect.
My body may not be brimming with
health,
But to have respect is an abundance of
wealth.

We have disabilities, that's true
But we can make a worthwhile crew.
Help us our dreams to pursue,
After all, we're people just like you!

We may be physically disabled
But we are of worth the same as the abled.
Give us a job and you will see
Us show to you our loyalty.
We're more capable than people think,
When you give us a job, you give us a link.
When we have a job, we have a key
To unlock the doors of our disabilities.

When you give me a job, you give me a seed
To help me grow, help me succeed.
We are people we have a need,
A place to go, a place to proceed.

Refugees from countries torn with war,
With aching heads, and hearts that are sore.
They need to have hope for their tomorrow,
Not trapped in their worlds of sorrow.

When you give a job to others
You are helping these sisters and brothers
Their children can thrive and stay alive,
Because of their working fathers and
mothers.

My disabilities are just a part
Of who I am, I have a heart.
I have love and feelings too,

Dis-abled Race

By Laura Runyan

**Honorable
Mention**

Zip, zoom the race is on.
Thoughts so fast, I'll never catch up.
Relief in sight? Or so they said.
Chronic, massive, destruction.
Down the rabbit hole I go, searching.
Physical challenges ensue.
Zip, zoom racing still, where is that relief?
A lifetime later,
Chronic, massive, destruction.
A tiny light, just within reach.
Recovery Explodes!
Dual diagnostic discovery
Medication breakthroughs.
Long road up the rabbit hole.
Dis-abled race, but still in the running.
My potential is seen. Peckham hears.
Employment opportunity appears.
Final relief comes, in the form of responsibility.
Zip, zoom still racing,
Satisfaction, dis-abled, working!

My Disability is Just One Part of Who I am

By Katrina Sprague

**Honorable
Mention**

Every day for the rest of my life I will live with the effects and consequences of my drug addiction. I have to live with the memory of the things that I did, during my addiction and the things I did not. I spent time in prison because of my criminal activities. My criminal behavior was motivated to get my drug of choice; crack cocaine, I would do any drug to escape the hurt, pain, guilt, and shame that I lived with. I just could not bring myself to face the pain and guilt of losing my daughter to the court system. I hated the idea that I lost my daughter to the court system because of my drug use. This was especially difficult because my mom lost my brothers and me to the court system due to her drug use. And for a long time, I believed that a drug addict was all I was, and that was never going to be any different. The drugs kept me that way for so long. The use of drugs made me believe that I was not worth anything and that I would never be anything else. But that was a lie!

I looked in the mirror the day right after I found out that I was pregnant with my second child. It was then I knew I needed to change. I needed to be a mother to the child I was carrying. It was time for me to move on. It was not easy to move on, but I knew that I had to be more! I knew that I had to find myself. I did not know anything about myself, being a mother, or living a normal life. On May 17, 2009, I began to find myself.

Today I am a mother to two beautiful girls, have a real home, a loving finance, a great job, and believe in myself. I am more than a drug addict, and I know that my life means something. I did not let my addiction rule me; it will always be a part of who I am but it is not who I am, not even most of who I am, just a part of me.

There are times when the fear, pain, and guilt creep in and I could easily let it destroy me, but I know today that my life does not have to be that way. I remind myself there is more to me than drugs. When I look in the mirror today I know who I am. I know that I did it; I made myself more than just a drug addict.

My disability is just one part of me. It is the part of me that makes me the good person, mother, sister, and citizen that I am today. I know that I do not want to go back to that part of my life because I know that it could be hell. I am happy today, I like me, just the way I am!

Moving

By Colton Moore

If it looks like I try too hard
It's because I have to
I crave pity I seek sympathy
I want to be recognized
who are you why are you looking at me
I know too much
I think too much
did I do it right dad is this what you
wanted
I'm sure you don't care about what music
I listen to
I want to connect with you my friend
Why am I going to a tech school
why can't I be who I want to be
I don't care about this
Teach me something I want to learn
what do I want to be
Oh, it's free to go
I guess I'll do it then
deprive myself of my livelihood I can do
that
Would it be okay if I did a graduation
speech
I want to show some form of validation for
my life
I'm actually doing a speech
I feel validated for once
I'm glad my family is here
Now what

now what
What do I do
how do I function in society
Guess I'll just sit here
And over think everything like always
don't judge me please I'm trying my best
What
You say you'll employ me
even with me being what I am
Wait
I have a purpose
do I really have a purpose
after all this time
Work shifts
Sure, I can work whenever you want me to
not like I have anything else
Hope this cash actually helps me
hope the money gets me over this horrid
anxiety
I'm really glad
I think I feel good
immeasurable lengths have been crossed
I have a purpose now
I wanted to feel good about myself
And now I almost do
I just need to get there
and I may feel better...

Disability Doesn't Stop Me

By Jay Duquette

*Don't stop! So your knee hurts.
Ignore it. Pain is part of life
So sharp every time you lift. It's only
A hernia come back to haunt your every
Blasted move. You play the cards
In your hand- everyone does. We're told the
Lord doesn't give more trouble
In your life than you can handle.
Trust comes first. Rely on
Yourself, then*

*Dive deep into your
Own spiritual haven of beliefs where
Ever-after answers lay, waiting in
Silent knowing for you- strength
Not taken up yet. It's
There.*

*Something is always available
To us, if we look hard enough for it. Employment.
Opportunities. Education. Our effort and desire
Prepares us to make the best of what and where*

*Me and you find ourselves. And, like the
Ever ready battery we keep on going- no matter what.*

Employers should hire people with disabilities

Because they are smart just like anybody else but they might look different or act different than a normal person but let face it nobody is normal that why the FATHER made ever one different that what JESUS said and who ever hire disability people are BLESS and the FATHER and JESUS will watch over your job and make sure nobody will not BURN too the ground and they will make more money the one who does not hire people with disability will not get the money

By Teresa Bozung

Growing up with disability has been a challenging one for me, I was in Special Ed classes since second grade. I was never made fun of, and some of my friends would ask to go to class with me. It did bother me in some ways that other kids got to do things that I couldn't do. They got to go on cool field trips that I really would've loved to go on. When I got in middle school, I was in normal classes and was assigned a helper in all of my classes. I felt more normal with everyone else, but in eighth grade, the helper got cut off, so I had to go back into all Special Ed classes and I felt like I have failed once again in my life. I was in algebra till eighth grade and was passing with good grades, I have always been good at math, and I went to class to learn how to count money. I tried to get back in regular classes but it didn't work out. Now, math is my weakness along with reading and writing. I have always struggle with reading and writing and I am still struggling with them. After high school, I went to Michigan Career Technical Institute (MCTI) which prepare people with disabilities for the work force. Later, I started working as customer service representative helping people and gaining computer knowledge as well. I didn't let my disability hold me back; I invested time and effort, and I got my reading and writing level up which I was proud of.

When I was in high school, I only worked jobs I felt comfortable at and what I knew best. One of my high school jobs was housekeeping, which I did, because that's what my mom did. Another was at 711 store, after high school, I saw the sign on 711 saying hiring. I went for a job like that because I was dealing with money and interacting with customers. I got an application at 12 midnight just for the fun of it, but well, I got the job and I was super excited, and I quitted my housekeeping job. The 711 job made recognized my weaknesses due to my disability which I told my boss about but he said he couldn't tell. When I went off to MCTI my boss made sure to keep my job in the summertime for me when I was on break. He also got me a job down by MCTI at 711 another store closer to me. Someone told me about a job fair at Peckham and I drove to Lansing and applied for a job at NPIC. I got super nervous when I got the job and knew that I was going to face all of my disability factors in this job. I had to read and take notes, which I did. I am very thankful for Peckham and for them working with my disability and others.

By Tavia Lanterman

In 1994 there was a real bad ice storm traveling up the East Coast. The weather was cold and ice had built up to almost an inch on the flight line. The decision was made to relocate many of our aircraft to a different base. We had to warm the jet engines just to get them to start. I had to relocate the heater from the left side to the right to get the final engine on our Cargo plan to start. As I was pulling it I slipped and was starting to slide under the heater I jerked up to stop from going under the heater. Little did I know just how much that act would change my life? My right arm went limp and I had lost feeling in that arm as well. In time it became evident that surgery would be needed.

I found out that I was diagnosed with degenerative joint disease. Gradual loss of the lining in my shoulder and increasing pain started taking a toll on my life. Soon the burden I put on my left arm to compensate for my right took its toll and I started having the lining in my left arm.

How does this affect my life? Pain greets me every morning if I have to work with my hands up at shoulder level I would lose feeling in my fingers and soon would lose control of my fingers. I would have to lower my hands and shake off the numbness till it went away. My Career, my life was fixing industrial machines, my income was good!

Slowly my ability was ebbing away and I could do nothing about it.

5 years ago I found out I have arthritis in my lower back, now I have to walk with a cane. Who will hire a Maintenance tech that uses a cane? Everything I had worked to matter, everything I had learned was fading away and fast.

I have been terrified seeing my abilities diminish, my life's work slip out from under my feet. I spent 6 months unemployed with only my disability. The disability income is not enough to survive. I have sold many of my things I have acquired in my life just to make ends meet. Sometimes the sadness just overwhelms me and I cry because all I really want is a fair shake. A fair chance to live and be proud of who I am.

Finally I got a job at Peckham, I finally can do something to earn some money, A job that my disability does not interfere with. My job is rewarding and a place where I am appreciated.

By David LeVan

I never imagined my name and the disability being in the same sentence. I knew I was getting sick but not to the point it was becoming a handicap for me. This January of 2015, I received a phone call from my primary doctor to ask me to make arrangements for me to go into the hospital. My test results were not very good and the doctors needed to investigate me even more. Tears rolled down my cheeks, I didn't believe my health has gotten this bad.

While in the hospital, I received two blood transfusions, a kidney biopsy and two surgeries for dialysis. Dialysis became apart of my daily routine, 3 days a week at a dialysis center up the street from me. Lupus has taken its toil on my body again and almost caused total kidney failure. A renal diet was introduced to me while in the hospital. It became apart of my path to wellness.

Although I had two surgeries in the hospital, the kidney doctor wanted the catheter out of my neck and a fistula in my arm for dialysis. The fistula in my left arm was permanent and it made that arm weaker. I could not do as much as I would like. The word "disability" was roaming around the doctor's office. I had already given up my custodian job and told not to "overwork" myself. I could not do physical labor jobs. So I thought I was retired by the age of 34. I wanted to know my options. From March, April and May of this year (2015), I was getting prepped for one surgery after another with a little time to recover. I felt like I learned the hard way about "the dark side" of

an illness especially lupus. My friend suggested I try Peckham for work. They hire people with disabilities. I looked it up online and became a little more hopeful about my future. I felt like I could not do anything but stay home and sleep. My kidneys improved so I didn't need dialysis anymore. Applying for a job seemed to be the next step.

So my friend took me up to Peckham in May, a few months after my 35th birthday to apply. I was waiting for my last surgery (catheter removal). They called me back a few weeks later and I had an interview. However I had to reschedule my interview due to my last surgery being the same day a few hours before the interview.

So I ended up having my interview around memorial day. I found out I was interviewing to work on the green jacket line. By June, I received a call to start training. I was so excited. I didn't let my disability stop me from pursuing my dreams.

By Francine Houston

LIMITED ABILITY

By Karen Roberts

Having a disability is not being incapable. It is somewhat of a limit of being able to do certain things.

If the world took a look at you with a disability and assumed to think that you are incapable of anything and measure you according to their view, then it's the world's misfortune to make that judgment. If you look out into the world and the vastness thereof you could say the whole world is disabled to some degree.

We are people who have intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge. We are people who are resourceful, effective and responsible. We are people who are skillful, articulate and vivacious.

We hold in common, love, beauty and justice. We have good hearts and the beauty of it all is that we are all created equal.

Our accomplishments show our power and our strength. We are capable to achieve goals within our abilities.

Disability is like a motor that has its parts dismantled. It cannot function. It's subdued. It's sedated. It's inoperable.

Now we have our limits, circumstances, bounds and essential needs, but we are able to strive to be what we want to be.

Still we are capable. We are active. We are motivated. We are triumphant.

We are people with limited abilities whether it be physical, mental, emotional or developmental or cognitive or a combination of the impairments.

Imagine living in a world where there are no imperfections, no limits, and no independence.

How would we then be inspired and motivated or be able to experience life intellectually, spiritually, and as physically as possible as anyone else?

We do that by being who we are and to the best of our abilities.

We are all able if we put our hearts and minds to what we want to do.

Person

The staff wants each of us to excel at our jobs as a person and they are there to help us. Here are some things that the staff has helped me do personally. Jen helped me to create a slideshow and Natalie helps me edit my writings. With the help of my VSS, I set goals that I would like to achieve within a year. One of the goals was to pass the applicant side training and I did.

Engaging

The team leads really work with us individually to get our QA scores and AHT handle times where they should be. Since I have been on the app side Laura has been my team lead the whole time and I have passed every call. My 1st QA in October was 100% and my last QA in September was 100%. My first two in a row on the app side and my only two so far on that side for 100s for QA scores.

Coaching

I really enjoy getting coached by my team lead on my calls. After my team lead coaches me, typically my QA scores improve.

Knowledge Base

I like that it has everything I need to tell customers regarding what is going on with the applications or how to apply for their passports.

Helpful

One thing that is helpful to me at Peckham is nice our VSS's. They help us with our disabilities and provide accommodations or the tools we each need to be successful in the workplace.

Ability

We all have so many wonderful abilities that help us to be a great company. Here are some of my abilities that I think are good for working at Peckham: I'm caring, helpful and I enjoy talking which is why helping customers on the phone is so enjoyable to me. The management and staff look past each of our disabilities and focus on helping us work with the abilities we have.

Management

I wanted to say that the management staff at Phoenix is amazing. They do so much for us: great events, a workout room and so much more. Magda helped to ease my mind when I was nervous going to the applicant side.

By Amanda Patterson

My Disability is One Part of Who I am

By Gary Lieberman

In my essay, I would like to address why working is important to me, someone who happens to have several disabilities.

In my case, I have several psychiatric diagnoses, all of which are well managed by medication and therapy. Given all that I've had to deal with, I think I'm doing rather well. Under the guidance of a psychiatrist, some psychotropic medication has been eliminated or drastically reduced. I have a stable employment record and my bills are always paid on time.

All of us in the disabled community share the same feelings, hopes and dreams that people everywhere share. When we're given a chance to work, some of our hopes and dreams can come true with hard work and persistence. A dream of mine was to someday own my own home. In December of 2014, I purchased a home for the first time.

Home ownership fosters a sense of independence and pride, both of which help my self-esteem and provide a sense of accomplishment. It gives me a good feeling to keep my home looking nice and I enjoy helping out my neighbors with various things such as digging out their vehicles in winter, moving their lawns or in any other way that is helpful for them.

As such, I have a feeling that I am accepted by my new community and this is very helpful for my mental wellbeing. I like to think that helping neighbors and also my participation as a volunteer with several nonprofit organizations demonstrates to

others that I'm still capable of helping people in a positive way.

Peckham is my employer and a main mission of theirs is to train disabled workers so that they're able to make a positive contribution to their operations as well as prepare people to work for other companies.

What I like best about working for Peckham is that employees are treated well. Supervisors I've worked with have always been eager to help me understand how to do my job better. I don't get the feeling that Supervisors or Team Leads are overbearing in any way. As such, I feel free to seek their guidance and this fosters openness and communication that helps me improve my job performance.

What uninformed people fail to understand is that regardless of the nature of a person's disability, we each have something to offer a company of a nonprofit organization as either an employee or a volunteer. When employers give disabled people a chance to work, we are eager to show how we can help increase profitability for companies and help nonprofit organizations accomplish their missions to make a positive contribution to the human condition.

I believe that if other disabled people were given a chance to work in their communities, they too could realize some of their hopes and dreams as I have.

Respectfully submitted.

Thanks.

By Hiram Hernandez-Salazar & Translated by Mei Bresnahan

Thanks God for giving me the sky and the earth, the air and water, for Adam and Eve, for Jesus, for Abraham and the Bible; for the belly of my mother and the seed of my father; my siblings and friends; for my body, my eyes, ears, nose, for my hands, for my mouth; thanks for allowing me to choose between the bad, the good.

Thanks Cuba for your culture, and for your lessons, for your education, your flowers, your trees and your sun.

Thanks United States for your wisdom and solidarity, for your Florida, for Texas and for New York, for your Mississippi, for the Grand Canyon, thanks for Michigan, for Lansing, for Grand River Avenue and for Uncle John's.

Thanks United States for existing, for letting me come to you, for welcoming me, for your help and your warmth; thanks for getting involved with me, in your people, in your blues and your jazz, in your 'nice to meet you', in your 'how are you', your 'bye bye' and your 'hello', for your water, your 'excuse me' and your food.

Thanks life for its beauty, for my beloved wife, my children—the reason for my existence, for my failures and successes.

Thanks for Peckham and its restaurant, thanks for work and overtime, for receiving us all without distinction of cultures or races; Asians and Africans, Cubans, Russians and Mexicans; Arabs, Indians and Americans; the tall, the short, the fat, fatter, and very fat; the thin, thinner and very thin; with eyes and without eyes, with ears or not, with legs and without legs, with hands and without hands; with trauma, with depression, with pain. None of it matters. Much and much love.

Thanks Peckham. Thanks God.

“The changed me”

By Patrick Young

In every day, a new way I've been graced by a opened mind, I could be anything or any time I wake to a new day the, change me I do believe, I can be what I want to be, to achieve my heart desire to clime the highest peck in my life, because I believe in myself the changed me.

I am not disabled. The only disability is in the eyes and minds of others that just don't understand that we have ability.

We may not have the strength, speed and agility of an athlete, or the ability to communicate like an orator. What we do have is need and desire to be accepted like anyone else that deem themselves normal. Some of us were born with issues that we have to overcome. Some of us were injured causing us to lose some of our abilities. And some of us have been witness to atrocities that have been so much a part of us that is becomes debilitating. So that makes us different and not accepted by some employers. The thing that I have noticed is those deemed abnormal are shunned by employers instead of embraced. Had they made a place for them, what they would have found is a hard working, loyal employee willing to give their all just for the opportunity to earn a pay check. Everyone should be entitled to earn their own way, but there is a prejudice against them for their disabilities It's not a crime, but it should be. I understand that not all jobs are for all people. What I do believe is there is a job for everyone; it's just finding that fit. Most employers have no desire to be concerned in finding that fit.

In my life I have been very fortunate in that I worked for myself for many years. I hired many of my employees that couldn't get hired anyplace else because of their physical issues. All of them but one was great employees. My only failure was a man that had a dependency on alcohol. We tried for two years to help him with no success. I hated to let him go. He was very good when he could work, but we lost too much work because he couldn't finish jobs. Now I am 65, and by all standards too old to employ. Interviewers won't admit it's my age, just too over qualified for the position. I would love to hire overqualified personnel for my business; not turn them away. Workers want to work. There are way too many that have no desire to work at all they just like cashing a pay check for doing nothing. So few people understand the difficulties that we face each day. Sometimes it's just getting out of bed/getting to work, or making enough to feed ourselves and our families. We have pride and honor, abide by the laws of the land and yet we are held back because of something that's just not normal to others. No I am not defined by disabilities, just my ability

By Jim Archambeau

If employers are looking for honest, dependable employees they need to look no farther than people with disabilities. Because they know what it's like to work with limited physical and mental body and thinking capabilities. They are willing to go the extra mile to prove they are worthy of a job.

By Jenifer Robison

Disability is one part of who I am, Voices
Voices, I do not hate this world,
I wish it would just leave me alone...
Stop torturing me with your villains and voices inside my head...
The ugly faces mean-mugging me, saying I wish you were dead...
You're ugly and a mess,
Oh, how I wish for a quiet morning, the sun rising and crackling through the white clouds
dancing - the trees dancing to the breeze of the wind,
A sweet fragrance of flowers reminding me of the sweet embrace of my mother,
unconditional love, acceptance of her child,
But, all the cries and the good-byes, hellos, the yes and the nos; I still have to deal with;
That's just one part of me.
There is a part of me that is strong, vibrant, loving, caring, creative
I desire all that for the world, it's as if the world lives inside of my head.
One side of the world is perturbed and disturbed,
The other side of the world is prayerful, peaceful, happy, just beautiful.
It depends on what day I choose; to be either, the good world or the bad world.
I choose good, I choose good.

By Anonymous

What I Have is Not Who I Am

By Joanne Routhier

Anxiety, bipolar type 1, mood swings, mood disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic attacks, and depression.

This is not who I am.

This is what I have been categorized as.

It does not define my life; it plays a miniscule part in what makes me unique.

I am a daughter, a sister, a loving caring mother as well as a passionate vibrant woman.

I am outgoing and honest. I may feel as if I have the world on my shoulders.

Bad things have happened to me in the past; terrifying, traumatic, detrimental, devastating, horrifying awful things that I have had to overcome; things I continue to learn from. Things I have used to become the "me" of my present and future. I am who I am today because of my past, but my disorders are not what defines me as a person.

I am so much more than a diagnosis.

I am more than a category.

I am a human being.

I am an articulate, wise and intelligent person.

Although I want to run and hide from the world, with its condescending looks and its intolerance, ignorance and fear of what is different...

I don't!

I stand strong; with the weight of a thousand worlds on my shoulders, supported by the encouragement from my loving fiancé and all those who understand and believe in me.

I run head first into the chaos, into the criticism, into the judgmental eyes of the

world and I fight back!

I speak up; I say what's on my mind. I wear my opinions and feelings on my sleeves for everyone to see. I hide nothing from anyone.

The labels bestowed upon me blink above my head like a sign that reads "judge here."

But regardless I thrive; I am me in all my crazy colorful personality and glory.

I won't manipulate or change who I am for the world.

I better myself as I see fit.

I love who I am, who I have become, and how I continue to grow.

Regardless of the hardship I have been through, the rude comments, dirty looks and sneers, I still thrive.

I have overcome, and grown strong despite the damage people unknowingly caused.

And as I age, I forgive and understand more than I did.

I try to help people understand my disorders.

I want others to have the determination and confidence to explain their disabilities without shame; to embrace their differences and not fear the gifts they possess. If everyone was the same there would be no diversity, life would be boring and dull. We need to make a stand.

Being different is not bad; should not be feared.

It should be celebrated and embraced as interesting, as intriguing, as a learning experience. We need to share our gifts with the world.

Educate people; we need to shed some light on ourselves

Stand for what is right!

Will you stand with me?

No Such Thing As Maybe

By John Weaver

Maybe it's hard to get out of bed in the morning, sometimes you don't see the point. All your life, you have been different in the eyes of others, been told you can't do it, that you shouldn't try. Why are you told these things? Why are people not willing to see you for who you are and what you can do? If you hear the doubts in another person's voice, and it's something you've heard all your life, maybe it starts to become something you believe.

"Maybe they are right," you say to yourself. "Maybe I can't do it, maybe I'm not good enough...."

It starts to get into your head a little bit. You worry, scared that they are right. It gets to you, you feel frustrated, angry, maybe even a little defeated. You feel like this thing that makes you different holds you back because people see it that way. There is a reason people call it a disability.

That reason isn't really because of you, though. It's more about the other person, the person who thinks that your so called "disability" is a problem. Maybe these people haven't ever spent time with someone who has different abilities, or skill, or learning styles. Some people think that everything they need to know about different people is something they can learn from others, from friends and coworkers, from pop culture, and media.

There is no substitute for experience,

though. All anyone needs is someone to see past the exterior, to look beneath the surface and take the chance. Those people are out there, the brave souls who will try the unconventional, who see the potential. People who realize that there is vast, untapped potential in workers that others view as "disabled." Where most see someone who is deaf, or is in a wheelchair and think "That person will be a liability," some will see a person who just wants a chance to show what they can offer.

"What can this person do? How can this person help me out? How can I help this person achieve their goals?" these are the types of questions that open minded employers are going to think about, and ask. These are the questions that workers want to hear, and more importantly want to answer. We don't need to hear "Maybe they can't do the job," or "Maybe I will have to retrain them again and again," or "Maybe I'm making a mistake,"

In the end, there is no "Maybe." In the end, there are only people who are willing to do the job, and can do the job, whatever it is, and just want to have the chance to prove themselves. In the end, there are just people who want to show their worth and how much they truly matter. In the end, they are people just like everyone else.

My Fibromyalgia is only ONE part of whom I am

By Stacie Davis

I am a mom of three girls and three godsons
I am a Christian who has strong faith
I am a person who aches and has pains
I am someone who pushes myself to not focus on aches and pains
I am one who sometimes can't bare the pain
Someone that breaks down and cries

But I Am Also:

A person who desires more
A Christian, who fails but who strives to do better
A mom who doesn't always have the answers but loves unconditionally
Someone that gives and no one knows this,
Standing in the back to see the smiles that come about

My Fibromyalgia is ONLY one part of me it may disturb some of my life BUT it will NEVER take over my life.

I live to love life and love to live my life.
Striving to push the aches and pains away, to not focus or think of it.
There will ALWAYS be someone else who is in a worse condition than I.

I aim to do what is right; I also fall but get back up on my feet and fly again.

Don't ever think you aren't worth anything; you are worth more than you think.
Remember, others watch you for your strength and how you go on with life.
You never know who or when you will impact someone; make it a positive memory.

I am a Disabled person, before I started working for Peckham, Inc. in 2005, I received Disability payments from Social Security. I was born early (premature), and had seizures until the age of 11 years old. I took special education classes in grade school, including speech therapy. I found out in my adult life, that I was very sickly when I was little and I was not given Immunizations that all children should have.

I had to work extra hard to pass College-Preparation classes in High School, so I could Graduate. (I worked on my homework from the time I got home from school, until dinner time, and then from after dinner until time to go to bed). I had what they called a "Learning Disability". I learned things slowly and had to go over it again and again.

I had little trouble finding a job, but was unable to keep up with what they wanted me to do. I was told I was slow and to find something different. "Different" was not to be found! I applied twice for disability, before I was accepted. I Received payments for over 10 years. I began to think that there had to be something I could do, other than being the live in Nanny for my Cousin (which I did for 14 years, between 2 kids). The kids were getting old enough not to need someone there, and I went in search for that something "More" or "Different" that I hadn't found in my life.

I found that Peckham was hiring for Sewers, and I figured that I could do that part-time to try it out, and see if I could make some money of my own and become more independent. I got hired and I was happy to be doing something - anything!! After a few months, I was approached by my Supervisor to go to Full-time if I wanted, she liked my work!! I was Happy!

I worked there for over 3 years, before I applied for N.P.I.C. (National Passport Information Center). I've learned many new things, they had several Customer Service Agents that volunteered to train me and others on how to do the job. The workers were patient and worked with me, to make my customer service skills the best I could get them.

It has been challenging but, very rewarding, to achieve and surpass goals that I have set for myself, and I feel like I have a Team of people helping and supporting me with whatever I need or want (Ex: raised desk for my back and legs, extra time in case I need it for bathroom or other things, classes to help me learn more about things {retirement, banking, health, P.A.T.H.-Personal Action Toward Health-, narrative portrait workshops}, and other things to grow and learn.).

It has been, well I can't say easier, but much more of a "fit" for me to work at and with Peckham. I have never felt like I was being treated differently because of my disability, as a matter of fact, Peckham helps me keep an open mind. I feel supported, and when I see an employment opportunity I feel like I can apply, because I can do the job just as good or maybe even better than someone else. Peckham has changed my life, and you can ask anyone that knew me before I worked here, and they will tell you that I have so much more confidence, pride, a drive to succeed, and the knowledge that I have the opportunity to apply for and become a Supervisor at N.P.I.C., if I choose. I also have the knowledge, ability and willingness to learn as much as I can and need too to make this a reality in my life!

Thank You,

By Laura Griffin

Employers should hire people with disabilities because people with disabilities can do the same thing that someone without a disability. People with disabilities get told they can't do anything. They get teased. Employers should always look pass a person with a disability. They should hire a person with a disability by what they can do and not what the disability is. What is a disability? If you look up the word disability in the dictionary it tells you three different things. One, it's a condition (such as an illness or an injury) that damages a person's physical or mental abilities. Two, it's a condition of being unable to do things in the normal way: The condition of being disabled. Three, it's a program that provides financial support to a disabled person. Years ago a person with a disability was labeled, no one would hire them. Some people thought that whatever was wrong with them may be contagious. We have come a long way in educating people that we are no different than any other person. As a matter of fact, I embrace my disability it has made me a stronger person. I has given me the confidence to do whatever it is that I want to do. Who has it? The answer to that is a lot of people in the world today. Why won't they hire me? People won't hire other that are different because they don't think people that have disability won't be able to do what they can. What do you mean I can't do it?

People who are different judge others because they think it's the right thing or that it's funny. If you can do it, I can do it, Please give me a chance. Almost everyone in this world has a disability or knows someone who is unable to do things in a normal way. I am a very hard worker, many folks I work with have a disability, but you can't tell by looking or talking to us. We work just as hard as the next person, sometimes harder because we want to prove that we can do anything we want if we try. If a company or small business is looking for a hard worker, a dependable person, a compassionate person and a loyal person, they need to hire a person with a disability. My name is Kayla Laferriere I have a disability and I am proud of it. It doesn't make me a bad person. I love to work and do what I can do. I can do anything someone asks me to. If it's hard for me I try my best or ask for help. People that judge other's because of the way they act are just making themselves feel good but they need to walk a mile in our shoes and see how it feels to be judged. My shoes are here if you want to take a walk.

By Kayla Laferriere

Hello, this is Krystal Anna Jorgensen. Let me tell you my story about why employers should hire people with disabilities and about me myself dealing with my disability. Employers should hire people with disabilities because they have just as much ability to work in community jobs as everyone else. If they have good attendance all the time and don't miss work at all, then they should be able to get a community job in the future and make money for themselves. And, so they're not poor on the streets out there or homeless. Work allows you to make friends, stay out of trouble and buy a home with the money you get from working hard for it. I am a Janitor at Peckham. My man, Lance, is a Janitor at Peckham too, like me. We do the same thing, but different shifts.

One of my disabilities is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and it is hard to focus with this disorder a lot. I repeat myself a lot even when I try not to. When I sleep I oversleep a lot, when I clean I get too involved cleaning and lost track of time, then I don't have enough time to mop the floor or do my next cleaning task. Because of my OCD I get too focused on posting on Facebook, guys, copying pictures on the internet, and listening to and downloading music on my cellphone. I even catch

myself listening to the same song over and over again. I get frustrated with myself with I stay up too late and spend too much time on things I shouldn't and then I oversleep for work the next day. Having OCD, it is so hard sometimes to not miss work. Cleaning is easy, but being on time is hard for me and for other people with disabilities, too. Not only do I worry about being late because I overslept, but I have to ride 3 busses to get to work which makes me late sometimes too. Most people with disabilities don't drive like me and have to depend on busses too.

I have a mild OCD disability so mine is not like my Dad's where he washes his hands a lot, I just repeat myself a lot over and over again, like counting stairs and other stuff. When I count money, I count over and over again sometimes I do it and forget I counted and count it again. I love having OCD, a lot of celebrities have OCD too, and they rock like me!! I love my ADHD and OCD, baby I was born this way. And I love working at Peckham, Peckham Rocks!!

aka Krystalicious J

By Krystal Jorgensen

Hey There, Little One

By Llysia Gauntt

Hey there, little one. Do you think that I didn't notice that you are peeking out from around the back of that chair? You're hiding spot of sorts. And, is it relief that I see in your eyes because you can see mine, little one?

What thoughts are racing through your mind while I am drifting from this land? Do you fear that I will never wake again? Because, little one, to be honest, I want to drift away.

There, there, little one. I know that you have been camping out, just out of sight, from behind that chair. Can you tell me how long you have been there, little one, just watching over me? Silently playing, watching, and guarding the outside world for which I have no care. I can see your picnic and your colors, little one. Tell me, how long have you been there watching and waiting?

You see, little one, no one is coming. They grow tired of the endless stream of chaos in the wake that I bring. They have all been chased away by ugly words and stupid dreams. So, little one, is it fair that you are my only guardian, my protector, my saving light?

And then, again, I come back from the darkness that has shadowed my existence. I see you, little one, helping me like no child should. Little one, please come hither, I am starting to wake and I am not yet able to face this world. Little one, I just need to sleep a little bit longer.

I see your eyes, little one, begging – no pleading with me to come back to you because “we” are all that we have left. I silently plead back with you, telling you that I do not want to wake, little one, for I fear that the memories and all the pain will start flooding my mind once again and if I open my eyes it will let the world come stifling in. Just a little bit longer, little one. Just a little bit longer...

There is so much torture in those eyes, every time I wake to see you peering back at me. Come hither little one; let me wipe your eyes, because this has just begun. Do you want to come and hide with me, little one? I would like it very much; but where I go, little one, no child should ever be. Your largest care should not be watching stead for signs of stirring; but, rather in the playing as little ones should. Instead, little one, you are camped out, playing guard, making sure that I do not falter.

Come and help me, little one, help me, please. Push me up, I cannot help myself. You are so brave, little one! Just a little bit longer and mommy will be so... Little one, you should not have to worry so. Little one, little one, where did you go? Please do not leave me, little one, I need you so....

Finish the Race

By David Brandell

You may be deaf, you may be blind
But don't let people tell you
We're leaving you behind
You've been created with talents
Unique only to you
So don't get down hearted
Or start feeling blue

It's people like you who can change the world over
Whether you were born with one leg or your brain is
bipolar
Franklin Roosevelt became President
He had polio from the waist down
So now it can be your turn
To be nationally renowned

Count the blessing you have
You can reach Paralympic gold
The victories you win
Will forever be told
Finish your race
Hold nothing back
Life is won by those who attach
Fight to the finish
The challenge before you won
The obstacles you face
Can all be overcome

You Don't Look Like Me

By Michaelle Major

You don't look like me.....Why as and employer should I hire someone with disabilities?

People with disabilities just want to work.....Movement in itself is an art form, so we aren't here to "TWERK"

Work around the water cooler is that the boss is a jerk..... However people with disabilities don't have time for ridiculous "gossip"; we are busy looking for new techniques on how to hold our "socks up"

People with disabilities just need a hand.....And Mr. or Ms. Employer, the work is in demand.

To the employer.....You have the will and you fit the bill- I have bills.....and can match your wills-

So think of me.....as your magic key?
Take the chance and hire me!

My name is Lee, I have always had a special place in my heart with people with disabilities, but never thought that I would become an individual with a disability. I may not look like I have a disability but I do. I was always on the go with the kids' school, games, shopping, and the everyday activities. I had a full-time job in the financial field. There became a time when I could no longer carry out the simple day to day tasks due to the pain I was experiencing. As the years went on the struggle became real. I could not sleep, could not stand to be touched, not even the slightest, the pain was so intense. My small grandchildren did not understand why they could not be hugged, held, or lay against me anymore.

After 14 years, I lost my job and with my limitations no one really wanted to hire me. In which my disabilities got worse, I could not walk far, stand for long periods, I began starting to fall a lot, and even sitting became painful. So my husband decided to try to support the two of us on just his income and after three years, he could not do it alone anymore. So I began looking for a job. I tried to do a couple different jobs, but physically I could not.

Then my nephew told me to try Peckham, so I did. I am slowly getting some of my life back, I still have physical limitations, but Peckham has worked with and around them as much as they can and for that I am grateful.

I believe everyone should have a chance to stay active in the work force no matter your disability or weakness. We are all different in our own ways but all the same, in the same circle we call life.

By Leona Foote

Give A Hug

By Laura Breese

Give a hug to someone and say, thank you for being my best friend, and co-worker on the work floor. It's a cool way to meet a new friend.

It's the best gift anyone can receive; from someone who cares for you deeply from the bottom of a beautiful heart is a generous gift.

It's the best gift to give a hug to people you don't know, oh how good it feels to share the love with friends and coworkers.

The best gift of all is to share the love between each other, this is why we all need to love, just to give a hug and make it last.

My Disability is only a part-of Who I Am. I am a Step Mom, of 3 children, 24, 22 and 16 years old. I am also a Student at Northern Arizona University, obtaining my Degree in Sociology and Minor in Special Education and Rehabilitation. I am a Wife, to a Great Husband of 10 Years and we also enjoy riding our motorcycle, and I am looking into getting my endorsement to ride a 3- wheel motorcycle. I have been a member of a Christian Motorcycle Association since 2010. I am also a volunteer at my church working in the tech department two times a month. As a young child and teen I also participated in sports. And, I have driven since the age of 15 1/2.

I have also worked for government agencies for most of my working career in the mainstream of employment before being hired at Peckham and currently working as a Customer Service Representative. I have had my disabilities my entire life, and also sustain a debilitating injury to my hand in 2014, and some head injuries, however, I feel that I do and I have a Full Life, and my Disabilities are only a part of Who I AM. I am also able to help others with disabilities to be more independent based on my Life.

Respectfully

By Mary M. Willoughby

My Disability is One Part of Who I am

By Mark Hampton

Can one thing define who you are? Are we more than just a label? Can we be worth more than just another warm body to a company? These are questions that can & should be asked among all employers. I've asked myself these questions over the years as I've struggled to grapple with who I am & what my value is to others & to myself.

Life is a journey of self-discovery where we continually are learning new things about the world & about ourselves & where we fit into that world. Living is difficult enough with just the day-to-day challenges of family, work, school, bills, appointments, health, religious, & humanity issues we all face. But having a disability can impact all of these worlds in a myriad of ways, both good & bad. In the employment arena, you can be met with various reactions ranging from surprise, to misunderstanding, to patronizing, to ignorance, & to discrimination.

Having a disability in the workplace isn't that uncommon or new, it's just always a struggle, & probably always will be. Some disabilities are obvious & everyone can relate to them on some level. If someone is missing an arm or can't walk & is in a wheelchair then most reasonable people will understand that this individual is most likely going to need some sort of accommodations for them to be able to do their job. But what about problems that aren't so visually obvious? What about those of us that look normal, but aren't? We appear to be completely functional, but in actuality, are barely holding it together. So in order to get the same level of understanding of our

situation (as someone who wears their disability) typically it requires providing lots of details of private medical conditions in order to try to get some sort of realization from employers, that they somewhat get where you are coming from & what your issues are.

It's always a balance though, because how much do I really want to divulge of my personal information to this individual? Who will they share this information with? What will they do with this information? Will it be used to discriminate against me in getting the job, or will it help me get the job by being up front with them, or do they just feel sorry for me? Once I share this part of myself with them, will they see me as anything else? Or will I always be this "particular disease" to them? Can they see that where this is one area of weakness, I also have many other talents & parts of me that contribute to a full, multi-faceted life? Hopefully they will notice that I enjoy helping people & customers enjoy my service & I do quality work. Maybe those things will outweigh any detriment that my disabilities might bring to the table. That is my hope for everyone like me.

My personal story as a person with a disability, and what working means to me:

As a person with a disability, with all that I've been through working on my being stable enough to work in the workforce outside the home, I've learned to appreciate being able to be early and on time, having perfect attendance, earning my paycheck in order to pay all my bills or expenses daily, just being employed means a whole lot to me and I'm very grateful and I don't ever take my positions in life for granted and I thank God every day for all He's allowed me to be able to accomplish for myself as well as for others, because just taking care of myself so that I can take care of others makes my day and makes me happy. Working means a great deal to me, just to be able to help others means the world to me, so I take care of myself and advocate for myself so that I'm able to take care of and help others daily. I keep a personal calendar of daily appointments, routines, work, etc. which helps me to time manage my days and my daily schedules so I'm not being stressed out or over worked or feeling overwhelmed. I enjoy living with my disability and working while disabled and helping others and taking care of myself and others. I also enjoy giving and receiving daily. Smile.

Why employers should hire people with disabilities:

Because we are people too, we're all in the same boat with each other which means we should be helping each other out as much as we can, as often as we can. We all have needs, wants, goals, and desires because we're all human beings, which are God's Creation, we need work in order to earn income to pay our bills and expenses just like everyone else with or without disabilities. We all have our own personalities, skills, and creativity to add to any workplace because we live in a diverse culture with many people from all walks of life, just like God planned it. We have just as much to offer as the next person, if not more, because of our gratitude and appreciation for being able to do the work and help someone else, this helps us (people with disabilities). Because we're capable and able and it's a blessing just to be able to work, earn money, pay bills and expenses, live our lives to the fullest, while helping ourselves accomplish our life's goals as well as help others daily, we live to live, give, and receive. Sharing is Caring. Smile.

Thank you. Love you all always,

By Christina E. Marshall

Educating the Learning Disabled

By Patrick Weingartz

I was always in the lower level of my class when it came to reading, writing and spelling. I struggled through it, but was still just passing. I fell behind very quickly. By the time I was in the third grade I could no longer keep up. I started to become angry and disruptive, and then gave up. It was obvious to my mother and the teacher that I did not understand the material. Soon after that I was diagnosed with a learning disability. First the school placed me in a mentally impaired classroom with children with severe mental disabilities. I was doing better because none of the material given to me was challenging enough. The teacher in that class recognized that I was not in the right class.

It was brought to my parents' attention, and then I was finally placed in a class called a learning resource room and had a teacher whom was named Mrs. Middlebush. I finally felt like I had place, where I could be myself, and where no one would judge me or think I was stupid. Mrs. Middlebush was the first teacher I can remember that made me feel like I could do anything that I set my mind to. For the first time in my life, I wanted to read. Learning disabilities are not a crutch or an excuse for students to do the bare minimum, but a hurdle they must learn to run full speed at and jump.

Now when kids enter school they are tested more frequently to identify those with learning disabilities earlier. Many schools still have a negative stigma attached to the term learning-disabled. They believe that if a student is learning-disabled and does not

possess the skills to process and comprehend one subject, then they are not going to excel in any other subjects either. This gives the student self-esteem issues, making them believe that they are unable to do the things that they should be able to do. Learning disabled students will sometimes excel beyond the average in other subjects that their disability does not affect.

Many learning disabled people have gone on to have very successful careers in engineering, education, law, as well as in many other careers. These students found a way to overcome the perceived notion that they were slow and unable to attend higher education institutions. One of the most important things schools, teachers, and parents can do for a student struggling with a learning disability is to encourage them to keep striving for what they want to do in life. By giving them the confidence they need to believe in themselves, they will be able to overcome any of the challenges they will face in life because of their learning disability. I know now that my disability gave me the strength to be my true self.

Living with a disability

By Naomi Christle

Every person deserves dignity in their life, but unfortunately some time it is taken away due to other illnesses. A lot of people with a disability feel like they are less of a person, a loss of self-esteem. Many cannot find a job. When a person is made to feel they cannot be a benefit to a one, they lose hope and a deep sense of depression takes over.

It does not have to be this way if given a chance these people can do a lot, sometimes the jobs no one else wants. They need to feel that they are worth something, just as good as others. They can work, they can learn new skills. This would give them back their pride, hope and lift them up out of depression these people need to know they are not forgotten and use full. There are several good examples, one is our vets these young people served their country and came home disabled now it is our turn to give back they are good workers, disciplined have honor and still have a lot to give.

They could support them to give themselves if given a chance. There are people who were working and got hurt on the job now have to find other kinds of jobs they were loyal to their country but cannot do that job. They would be just a loyal hard working as to be for if given a chance than those who are born that way and those illnesses have taken a toll on are just as able to do something.

Any employer would be lucky to have any one of them they are just like the rest of us only have a problem this will not stop them from giving their best. Any employer who hires them I think care about their community the people they would be looked up to and even get more support from the community as well for hiring the disabled as well for hiring the disabled is a honorable thing to do.

I like my job at Peckham, it makes me really happy. Now that I am happy at work, and I find more things a lot easier, I am working on being happy and healthy at home too. I like going for walks. I also like going to the movies at the Lansing mall. And I have met new friends at my AFC home. I like helping out at work and at the house. At home I help out with the trash and we have healthy snacks at night before we go to bed. At work I like to help my coworkers, like emptying their trash cans. And I am starting to become more independent. I volunteer at the VOA serving food and I want to volunteer at the library on weekends also. I also like learning new jobs too because I get to learn new skills and meet new coworkers. I am working toward getting a more independent job in the warehouse. I also believe that everybody has a right to work even when they have a disability.

By Robert Breen

I am Marilyn Finch and I am a 54 year old female who has Cerebral Palsy. I went to Peckham after high school and started working there on July 27, 1981. I love working for Peckham and it has been a great time working for Peckham. The staff and the people there are special to me. I like doing stuff for the soldiers.

I also feel that Peckham gives me a chance to be myself and work really hard to do my best on my jobs. I take my time to do it right when trimming jackets and it makes me happy to do my best.

I also like to do things to keep me healthy and stay healthy all of the time.

And also, I like my case manager, Jamie Potter. She has been a great lady for helping me sense she has been at Peckham.

By Marilyn Finch

On May 24, 2007, I was in a very bad car accident that should have taken my life. But by the grace of god I lived. I received a TBI (a traumatic brain injury). Is this one of the disabilities that I have, and deal with? Some people call it a disability, I just call it a chapter in my book.

Do I have short and long term memory, am I all ways forgetting things,
Do I get tizzy sometimes about things, do I loose concentration at times it's a big problem for me. The answer is yes to all the above. Debility is just a word that some people want to use. I myself do not always feel as if I have one

I try to lead a life full of fun and enjoyment as much as I can, and try to stay busy. My walking will get in the way at times, but that is what walkers are for.

Do I know that I have something wrong with me, well yes I do. That's ok I know that my speech comes out crazy sometimes and my memory is bod when I try to talk. Forget what I'm saying and have to look for help from somebody. Things that is wrong with me could be worse.

There are so many times that family will not understand me
Why I repeat myself
Why I forget so many times about things

My traumatic brain injury did not just affect only me, it affected the whole family.

I had to check into 15-30 jobs. No one would hire me. I have limited standing and sitting.

I finally check into Peckham where I started working August 22, 2010. I was just overly excited about this. I was glad to work again. With the support that I get here is just overwhelming. Many more places should hire people with disabilities. We work hard and happy to work. Peckham had gave me the chance to work again to make me feel whole.

I cannot change who I am or would I want to.

Thank you and have a beautiful day

By Sandy Jo Wolfe

I started working for Peckham in 2013 for the seasonal customer service – call center (KB) and love working for the seasonal customer service when the season end I was let go, I kept checking with human resource to be call back for the next seasonal time. And was notify from Jennifer to come back and was hire back as a full time employee I was very happy working for Peckham and start in 2014 – Everything was going good I also was able to take a small vacation to see my family in California at the end of March. – When I came back from vacation everything was going great until the end of the season I was able to stay and work in the call center full time and days.

I started at the end of August not feeling great my hands turn a very dark purple and then my whole body started hurting. I had a day off after labor day so I went to see my doctor and the doctor ran some tests on all the major disease and everything came out with nothing wrong , but I was still not feeling great and was not able to eat or think very well my supervisor was a blessing back she was there for me, on the days I didn't feel good but I kept coming to work , because I feel that whatever was wrong with me I doctor will find out . I was told to try to get some rest was much as I can to keep my strength up .

So around middle of November my doctor send me to see to doctors – the first was a RHEUMATOLOGIST ARTHRITIS and then I was send to have a EMG TEST what these

doctors came up with was that I had (RA- PA- Fibromyalgia) theses disease are the nerves- bones- muscles – And so in December my new doctors told me that I would need strong medications to help me get better – and that I have a very strong chance to reverse my illness, but it will take some time but I will always have this illness in my body just have to control it will be great. Going thought this illness has made see things different first I had a very strong support team with my rock of a husband and my children's have been there for me and have took me to all my appointments and also I want to thank my VSS at Peckham : Dessie Johnson she has help me to get my hours. to part-time so I can heal.

I was having problems working full time and so I talk to me doctor about working part-time I look at this as a way to keep myself busy I have always been a strong person and had always done everything for myself and others. So when my illness happen I had to look for help which was hard for me but with all the support from everyone around me. I have been able to heal and keep working, I'm starting to feel a little better and in time I will be able to except my disability and live on.

By Rosalyn Zavala

Tasha Embry's Faith

By Tasha Embry

March 14, 1999 was a start of a new life for me. I was working at a health care facility. I had been at this facility for almost two years. This particular day I was called to a different floor then I normally worked on because they were short on staff. The nurse that was on the floor gave me roll call of the patients, and informed me that they were all in bed, and changed for the night. When she left, I decided to check on the patients, and when I got to the first patients room I walked in, introduced myself, checked him and he was completely soaked. I started to change him, and in the process I felt something pop in my back. I never felt anything like this before because I was always in good shape. I continued to change him then I left his room bent over in pain. The head nurse asked me what happened I explained, and she proceeded to tell me to go file an incident report. At the time I didn't think it was necessary but she insisted, so I did. I went home that following morning in a lot of pain, scrawled into bed, and went to sleep. When I woke up I could barely stand so I called my job and they got me into their doctor. When I saw the doctor she didn't take me serious. I could tell she thought I wasn't telling the truth about my pain. She made me go back to work for two weeks with limited ability, meaning I was a paper pusher.

When the two-week was over I was told to go back to work or lost my job so I went back. I worked until November in pain. Then I was approached by my manager who told me that she was supposed to fire me, but she told them she would not because they will have the biggest law suit on their hands if they did, and she would not be a party to it. She let me know of a class that she wanted me to take so I could change into a sit down position. I took the class and transferred. I was on the job for three days. When I was rushed to the hospital where I went paralyzed, the doctor found a tumor in my back. This was crushing my spinal cord. I was told that I would never walk again, and I probably wouldn't make it. I told the doctor he was not God and I will walk again. I would live because God has something in store for me. I had to have surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. After all that I was able to walk out the hospital. I am numb from my knee to my feet. The doctor cannot explain how I am walking but I can, it is my Faith and it is the Grace of God.

My Disability is One Part of Who I Am

By Cindy Titch

On a hot summer's day in the bustling city of fire twin brothers were born to an average middle income couple. Levi, the first twin and David, born five minutes later, both whom were born with a disability they had to learn to live with through out their childhood. The brothers were very close and each others best friend. Their disability was internal not noticeable by society, but noticeable to their peers from Kindergarten to sixth grade. They faced many hardships together trying to learn how to live with a mental disability that affects the way they learn and the amount of time it takes to learn something new. This made them feel very different from everyone in the classroom and at times lonely.

This was a disability Levi and David were determining to overcome as they entered into Jr. High and High School. They knew that their disability is only one part of who they were and they wanted their peers to see them as they saw themselves; as normal, funny, active, young men with hope and dreams to one day make changes in the world for the better. Levi and David got involved in different after school activities and sports. Hoping their peers would notice they were just like them.

Having a mental disability can be overwhelming and at times depressing, not letting the depression control you can be a greater challenge. Levi and David depended on each other to patiently talk each other

out of any doubt of what they can do or the depression they feel from dealing daily with their disability. When they were younger and feeling sad about their limitations, their mother would tell them that their disability is only one part of who they were and there is more to them then their limits. God has given them many gift and talents to make a difference in the world. That's what Levi and David tell each other now to break free from the doubt and depression.

When they graduated from High School, Levi and David decided to go to different Universities. They went to a University that would teach them how to use the gifts and talents that God gave to them to make a difference in the world. As young adults they now know and except that their disability is only one part of who they are and the only limitation they have are the one they except. The brother's were now ready for the new challenge that faced them, but this time was different they felt better prepared and less afraid of what others may think of them or their disability. They looked forward to what each day at the University may bring their way and the new friends they will make in the coming years. Levi and David's future looked brighter because their hopes and dreams are now in reach.

Tonya Barry's Life with a Learning Disability

By Tonya Barry

I was born to Marvin and Dixie Williams, when my mom was pregnant with me she went to her Dr. like normal on Oct.5 1975 and she was larger than she should have been so the Dr. thought she was overdue and made arrangements for her to be induced. On Oct.6,1975 when my mom delivered me she started having more pain and the urge to push again and the nurse said omg get the Dr. back over here there is another baby to the shock of every one my mother delivered twins Girls .We were born 2 months early, we were put in oxygen beds where we received too much oxygen to are brain and it didn't help that we was born 2 months early.

At the start of my educational years, I was put in the Resource Room my whole life kids didn't want to play with me. It was very hard going through school with a learning disability The baby sitters brother raped me before we even started school didn't help any and it didn't stop there, this went on my whole life with different men. When it was time for me to graduate I was not ready I could not hold a job I lived with my mom and family members, till I had my twin boy's. When I became 21, I then began to live on my own for the first time and that was even hard I was a mother before I should have been. In 2002 I married a man that helped me along my way. I started my first real job at Casey's in Galesburg IL. For 2 years then we moved to Iowa and I transferred and had another baby then I started having health problems and couldn't keep a job and ended up moving back to IL. Again when, that didn't work out either then I was back on the hunt for a new job I left my husband of 13 years at that time and me and my kids moved back to West Liberty, IA and lived in a tent for 7 months I got a job working at General Dynamics and moved me and my 3 kids into a 1 bedroom apartment in Wilton IA. Then after working there for about 1 year I put my application in at Peckham and I have been here ever since and it has been a blessing for someone like me with a disability.

Who

By Wanda Lynn Johnson

Too late to make a balance,
No steady with parents,
No scent for seasons changing,
No compositing in academic arranging.
Feeble with sensation down in every
temptation
Something is ill wrong with everywhere
A series of sickness as if a human has no
care.

As the provider of these days set the sun
and it's ways a tempo passenger dawns into
the mist of its being of who I am.
I may not understand my failures and if
could discover myself the opinion of others
is a quarrel of points of no balance for itself.

Where is
my incapables and disabilities?
Scolding is a tone we use for speaking a
source used by ancestors speaking.
Who I am is caused for a incapable mixture
that has allowed rebellion picture.
Now this disability is inside of me how do I
produce brilliance for me.
Words can perform some punishment of
mental illness done.

Cautiously spare someone, and the cost of
who I am is available for some. Who I am,
the sight of inside of neglect. No proper
attention no way to pass by something like
that.
How can someone inquire a deliberate
defect failure of darkness and a ill act that
can't spring back.

Who I am mentally a sensitive nerve like
lovers fibers depart like bad netting like a
cry. Like a

melody of keenness a disturbance that has
lost its sweetness.

Disappointments tend on rights non
membership fashions who I am, a personal
story in illness lived in life. Doubting the
whisper seeping my ears, sounds of ooze
who's I continue to hear. Can't find a base
to place a cheer a particular side of illness is
continued here.

How to grasp the seizes smoked around
my ears and hear its delayed in leaving I
can't continue on, I can't go ahead Can't
find surface of disability it grows and grows
includes all materials disturbing with me.
It feels like fight it torments like pain,
it denotes perfectly of who I am. A
discoloration a deep stain. Occurring
reverse something of a dream millions of
thoughts that out with me. I long for a goal
of who I am you see and these tendencies
reflex me. A complex of me is heard to blush
behind this mental stuff.

Services are allowed to help, but my
appearance shapes and color something
else. Combating along many individual
concerns a mind separated a mark to learn.
Group of trouble face my days surround
with authority a power to position a place
to stay. Attempted with this in every way
consequences disciplines the ability as
new clay. Pain characterized who I am. A
tangles shaggy disorder throbbing to shine
grasping for someone arms, but shock in
the mine. The spices of my life is minced a
new attitude unable to fit. Deprived of good
luck feelings all the time and fighting with
this old mine. Disgusting a foul matter could
live in side of me blinding the lights so I
can't see. As wild as mental sickness will be
a cruel collection be failing me. Who I am.

Employers should hire people with disabilities for here there is an untapped treasure of different qualified people with different talents and abilities. Here a business can become strong and successful when it is able to use all of the resources available for them to use. There are different reasons why I would hire these people with these different abilities:

- They are people of character. They really know who they are and then what they can and cannot do, they know their limitations.
- They are opportunistic and really like to be challenged. Sometimes can make different challenges into successful opportunities, which are to grow or expand the person, the person's department, and/or organization.
- They are honest and up front with their limitations and always ready to take on different challenges. In the areas where they are not limited, are willing to try and do things in different techniques/strategies as a means to make up for the limitation(s) they may have.
- Here these people are able to really see what they cannot do. With that they really can achieve and then train others what they can do well.
- These people can also dream and come up with different ways on how to do different things, and ways to become reliable members of our community/workforce.
- These people can bring a different mind-set to the table when different decisions are being made. Where here they can bring that sense of assuredness to their lives, the decision table, their position, and then even to the direction to where they are going/or wanting to go. So here they may be a little more sensitive to what all is drawing a person to do something/act in a certain fashion.
- Sometimes I myself like to be challenged. Again this is where I can see what I can do; where I need to be trained, or where different changes need to be made so then I can do my best to accomplish what all I am asked.
- These people can bring a sense of hope when all the rest are in a sense of hopelessness. They have received similar reports, and found different ways thru/around the wall(s) that is in their way. Will know how and where to get this hope. Here they had found hope and then in some instances can spread this hope on to others.

With all of that said, it's right for anyone to take advantage of the pool of candidates that are disabled in one area of their life, but have learned to make up for that weakness in three or four different other areas in their life. A sense of hope, real hope can be brought to the table, decisions, organization, and this hope can become contagious. Here let us be and then set the right example, and let them qualify themselves, not by what they can't do, but by what they can do or to be trained to do.

By Allen Strozewski

Strength

By Brett Winkel

Strength is not measured only by size
But by the level of determination that one has in their eyes
So it is no surprise
That they smile,
Seem happy
And drive on with their lives
Some experience pain when their working or playing
Others struggle just to communicate what they're saying
Do you think for one second they have thought about quitting?
Yes. Yes they have, but I think you're forgetting
That some people have spent their entire life sitting
They have overcome obstacles that most couldn't imagine
And had moments of emotions ranging from sad to get mad, then
After the trial is over and the task is completed
They've exhausted themselves and are completely depleted
Do you think they complain or feel as though they've been cheated?
No they do not
This is a the measure of strength that I speak of
I encourage anyone to try and endure just a week of
The struggles of some or the trials of others
At the core we're the same we're all sisters and brothers.

I have always been a person who was self-reliant and hard working. I had never thought of myself as a person who would ever need special consideration or help to achieve personal goals. It seems that in a very short period of time I experience several major life changing events. In 2008 I experience the failure of my marriage shortly followed by my loss of employment. During that same period of time it was discovered that my mother was losing her battle with cancer. I discovered at this time that I had a degenerative form of arthritis that required me to have a hip replacement and perhaps more surgeries in the future, I never felt so helpless in my life.

I found myself for the first time out of work and severely depressed at the decline of my health and adjustment of losing my mother. I reluctantly started the process to obtain social security disability because I found that I was unable to do the very labor intensive work I had been doing for several years (I worked as a building manager and a tech for AT&T). I was advised to go to St. Johns MI Works branch and was introduced to Christa Miller. This lady was to become a person who transformed my life in ways that she may never know. Mrs. Miller suggested that I try this company called Peckham that had this phone center position. I was reluctant because I had

always done jobs that involved me being outside and working on my own (Never thought of myself as a cubicle type of guy). I applied and found out that I not only had aptitude for this type of work but I also enjoyed the environment (working out in -24 degree weather isn't as glamorous as it sounds).

My employment gave me back my self-respect and a chance to meet people with varicose degrees of disabilities. I learned to see the person not the disabilities. I realize that the one thing that binds us together is our desire to work and live a respectable life. I have met some of the most kind and inspiring people working in this environment. Throughout my various surgeries and daily aches and pains I can reflect on some person here at Peckham that rolled or limped past me supported by a cane with the biggest smile because they are able to be productive. I have learned that the human spirit will continue to surprise you.

By Howard Smith

I would first like to introduce myself. My name is Leticia Garcia and I chose to write about “Why employers should hire people with disabilities”. Struggling with my own personal disability, having depression has not been easy to deal with. It has made me open my eyes to the world. Understanding that I am not alone has really helped me get through and tackle my disability. We all meet many people in this journey of life, many of which touch your heart in so many ways that even words cannot express how to describe them. You sometimes wish you can just freeze some moments in time. In the past people who struggled with various disabilities lost all hope because they thought they could not find work or be part of the workforce. Over the years, I have understood there have been companies like Peckham, who have been employing people with disabilities and making differences in people’s lives for years. In doing so this has created much more hope for millions of people like me. I think it is such a sign of great news that companies are investing in people who have significant disabilities because there are so many who have such great untapped potential to prove themselves and to contribute to the overall success of these companies, as I see each day at Peckham. Peckham serves as an example of service to people with disabilities. Peckham has been recognized as a company who is at the forefront of hiring such people, people like me. Having the opportunity to work has been such a blessing for me and my family who has been supporting me for so long throughout. Depression is not an easy thing to deal with. Having stable employment at Peckham has been such a blessing for me and my family. I value my job a great deal and I always put forth my best effort into everything I do at Peckham. Being a part of Peckham and being around so many beautiful people has been my real medication and has helped me cope with my depression.

The staff, supervisor, my coworkers, human resource staff and all who I come into contact with at Peckham, I cannot express my gratitude which I have for them. In closing, I believe should be afforded a chance at work regardless of an individual’s disability. Patience, support, communication and friendship are just some values which can contribute to a person’s overall well-being at the workplace and outside the workplace. We can all do our part for a better tomorrow one person at a time.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to write my feelings on this very important topic which has really touched my heart in so many ways.

By Leticia Garcia

A Short Story about Living with Bipolar

By Victoria Huff

I have never considered myself to be disabled. It is because I was comfortable with who I was as a person. Although I learned at a very young age that my high-strung behavior was unacceptable and unmanageable for teachers who were trying to educate me in school.

Back in the 1950's they did not have any specific Doctor to determine if any kind of medication could assist with the problem. Even though I had difficulties I still kept my strong will. In sixth grade a teacher found that I could run fast and I was put on the Junior High Track Team and found that I had a knack for sports. In High School I played four years of basketball and was captain the fourth year and scored forty points in a tournament. I was proficient in free-throws and won awards for that also. During all that time I assisted my mother around the house with my younger brother and sister, while maintaining a B average. At the end of my high-school career my basketball coach was offering me a basketball scholarship to Iowa Wesleyan. I turned down the scholarship to help my folks with a family business.

I self-medicated during my twenties with a variety of things trying to appease my moods. I have been in the hospital multiple times and have been out for over ten years as I abhor going into the hospital. My feeling is that the illness is part of me and being hospitalized will never cure. I need to learn to live with it to the best of my ability. During that time my husband at the that time took off with my daughter and ran all over the U.S. I have to fly to another state to obtain her only to have her fall into his hands again. During the time that I was trying to find my daughter I was sustained a head injury inflicted by a man who told me he would help me get my daughter back. Looking back on this experience I realize that people are not what they seem to be when presenting themselves.

I ended up on disability when I turned thirty-five much to my dismay. I've gone through quite a few self-medicating experiences trying to aid in my extreme highs and lows. I finally reached an all-time low and ended up in a nursing home for eight months. It was horrible. I then went into assisted living and eventually got into an apartment. After the neighborhood turned bad I served on a Neighborhood council as a liaison between the neighbors and the center. We reached out to get policing in the area. Prior to that I had volunteered in a Domestic Violence Center and learned quite a bit there.

I was on disability for 21 years, I worked part-time to aid with income struggles, it was tough but I kept going, however through schooling and Vocational Rehabilitation I came to work for Peckham and have been here nearly eight years. I never never give up. Thank you.

Hi, my name is LaKeya Ryan and I have a disability.

Since I was a young child I've always had trouble with my hearing. It was so bad that you could sit on one end of a couch and me on the other and say my name and I wouldn't hear a thing. By twelve years old it got so bad that I had to get "tubes" put in my ears and just dealing with them throughout your whole life is just such a hassle. Like the fact that I cannot get any water in my ears or I will go deaf, or the fact that I cannot go to concerts and places with loud sounds because it would hurt my ears. Having supersonic hearing is a plus and a negative.

It's true with a hearing disorder things are difficult but it doesn't make things impossible. I'm blessed to say that I currently have a job where actively listening is one of the main things I have to do. And if I may say so myself I believe I do a great job.

What I'm saying is that having a disability already limits some things that we may be able to do, and having a job should not be one of them. Working is a part of life and for someone to possibly not get the chance to experience that due to a disability is unfair. I commend the businesses who give everyone a fighting chance. Working gives people with a disability a sense of courage and to feel as an equal to someone without a disability. And even though we may be disabled doesn't mean we are incapable. Anything you can do I can do bettttttterr!rrr!

So for me being able to work is an honor, being able to work is a blessing, being able to work is an "I TOLD YOU SO" to all the people who thought someone with a disability couldn't do it. I'm proud of all the people with a disability who are respectable lawyers, teachers, salesmen, mothers, and fathers and working to the best of their ability and gets the job done every time. I love the fact that this issue is getting addressed and I look forward to seeing more people just like me in the work place.

By La'Keya Ryan

Oh'my dear

Every quarter, every year
Here is a bonus oh' my dear
No more sorrow no more tear
Give thanks to God oh' my dear.

Every question, always prayer
Here is a answer oh' my dear
No more guilt no more anger
Everything is gone oh' my dear.

Every breath, every air
We can joy oh' my dear
No more stress, no more
depress
Peckham is here oh' my dear

Peckham helps your life in reality

Peckham became father and mother
Where you can find love and care
As like Michigan nature is pure
Peckham always wipe your tear.

Center for disable,
Relief and peace is available
You can find angle Gabriel
You are always valuable.

As you change mind for narrow
Peckham is there to lift you up from zero
Not only for today but for tomorrow
You are always hero.

Many religion many ethnicity,
No matter you are disability
No matter what is your past morality
Peckham helps your life in reality.

Together singing always rhymes

Every tribe and every class
From the mountain to river
Where you and I work
Peckham became very near and dear.

Close like is in my heart
Brightness like sun, moon and stars
Thought is coming like mountain
climber
We are always Peckham member.

Silent night, peaceful morning
We can cheer all the time
Oh' you know work like in Peckham
Together singing always rhymes.

Peckham gives you all identity

Over the mountains sands and
sea
Our Peckham looks like green tea
Oh' look here unity in diversity
Because together working you
and me.

Fabric like a golden tee
Working like a honey Bee
No matter boss are he or she
Because all we believe in Trinity.

Following rules work is easy
No matter how we are busy
Learning classes always free
Peckham gives you all identity.

By Anata Dahal

The Best You Can Deserve

By Darren McAdams

Monday morning, on the ninth of September Vietnam vet and retired sergeant Bonnie Miles prepares for his work day throwing some water in his face and blow dries his long hair and combs his white beard while rolling his wheel chair everywhere he goes. He then goes to his bed room throws on his 3rd Calvary uniform and memory starts to flash back to him he is thankful to have the job with his leg being amputated, in the Vietnam War he had a wife but she died of cancer fourteen years ago, but he had two children Max and his daughter Zebedee both grown up as he looks at his photo albums before going out the door to his bus ride. His bus ride finally makes it, at about 9:30 he rides it to work. When he finally gets to work everyone looks at him and smiles the staff say good morning. He just waves not being bothered to say morning because he's got memories that block him from being that way.

He's strolling along the walk way of the building and he sees a young man who's always friendly to him and giving encouragement listening to his loud music. Bonnie sneaks up behind him as he's sleeping before work starts with the music in his ears. While Bonnie squeezes the back side of Don's booty he laughs when Don gets freaked out. "Oh morning Bonnie," said Don scared out of his mind. "You shouldn't listen to your music too loud boy" said Bonnie.

Don responds. "I know Bonnie, how are you doing today." "Oh alright, responded Bonnie just miss my family being around." "I'm here for you brother. Said Don, "I know you and me like combat buddies, I am your squad captain. Work bell rings as Bonnie and Don hit the factory floor. Bonnie works very wonderful ways with his wheel chair he's very classy with the lady staff even know he don't like to talk to anyone but when he's around me I think his life is better. Hopefully he will heal from his memories in Vietnam I pray hard every day.

My Reason for Story

The medical disability is not just supporting people with high ingenuity. It also supports are honored veterans who served this country for the purpose of our freedom to have this program, without this program there will be veterans with bad issues that can't find jobs because of their wound or disability from combat, I believe in the disability act because I am handicapped. I have a major heart defect both of my valves were missing when I was born. I am happy that I have this job and those veterans who cannot find a job easy as I can they need this job for family's to stay alive.

Living Life with a Disability

By Ché Swanson

48.9 million People have disabilities, 24.1 million have severe disabilities and 34.2 have a functional disability. My disabilities are paranoid schizophrenia, personality disorder, narcissist and anxiety. For years I have been struggling with my disabilities that have been passed down through my bloodline. Every woman on my mother's side of the family has, or will later in life take medicine for psychological issues.

I am blessed that my job employs 80 to 85% of people with disabilities. This is my first job that I don't feel like I am in jeopardy of losing due to the fact that I don't always work well with others. I have overcome one of my disabilities, I have been analyzed stating that I will never obtain or hold employment because I work better alone. I am proud to say, I have been employed at Peckham going on three years.

One of my disabilities is sometimes I have problems with controlling my anger and Peckham has worked with me and provided programs to help me control those anger issues and for that I am very grateful. I like having some place to be every day and earning my money legally. Peckham has put stability in my life. Some of my anger issues stem from being locked up in a house and abandoned when I was three years old with my two younger siblings. You never lose that feeling of being lost, unloved, unwanted and abandoned, which has created many trust issues in my life. I was tossed into the system but luckily I was adopted at seven by an older couple as an only child. My adopted parents have been very good to me! My parents (adoptive parents) have always supported me and been by my side, when I would have tossed me back many times because of my many outbursts, and six elementary school placements.

I am a little rough around the edges people just need to get to know me. I love to read, play bingo, chess, bowling and horseback riding. I advocate well for others..... have disabilities, I am not my disability.....I am Ché.

The Aesthetics of Mental Disorder

By Juan C. Doménéch

My dawns so kindly, born as desert waves,
My nights die also through the atriums of hell.
Depression's evil, noiseless cracks my shell,
In silence murders, every joy, ...then craves.

A fair less battle full of cruel knaves.
Among think darkness I'm an atom's cell.
Come judge my canvas, find the painting's spell;
If I'm "disable," I'm the talents traves.

Depression's tasteless even it taught me art,
It took me further, nearer- into path:
Poetry's shorelines where my verses start.

Oh!, read this sonnet, twice for it's a wrath.
This speech is bitter, sweet; it eats my heart:
A virgin river toppling down its lath.

Ooooooooooooo

My Ghost and I

By Zoraida Navarro

Invisible as a ghost
My disabilities are
But they lash, bind, hurt.

Around me everybody is blind,
Nobody sees me
And I jump, spin, wait.

Around me everybody is deaf,
Nobody hears me
And I scream, laugh, prey.

My ghost and I
Always in the same way
And we suffer, fight... play.

“What If”

By Donna Gathof

I play this game inside my head,
It's called “what if “,
And it begins as soon as I'm out of bed.
It's a game I cannot win,
Or even want to play,
And it almost always ruins my day.
It begins with a thought,
I know is not true,
But that doesn't matter,
Let me just tell you.
A what if creeps into my brain,
And the scenarios are such a drain.
Here are a few examples of the way I play,
See if you can keep up,
And don't let the thoughts cause you to stray.
Look at the dog over there on the street,
Maybe he just wants something to eat.
“What if” I pet him and then he bites
I could get rabies and so
I pass by him,
Shaking with fright,
But What if the dog decided to chase me?
What if I couldn't get away?
What if nobody wants to listen?
When I say he's more than just a friendly stray?

The thoughts circle about in my head and I just,
Want to go home and sleep all-day in my bed,
But what if when I open my front door, theirs a burglar,
Sneaking about my house,
Quiet as a mouse,
What if I didn't know what to do?
What if he shot me or even you?

Now you know how I,
Play this game,
It's called what if and,
As I said before it's such a drain,

I want to get better,
I want to be free,
I just want to be me.
Maybe someday I will see,
That this game I play in my head,
Is really just my anxiety!

My Disability is One Part of Who I am

By Leslie Gomes

[dis·a·bil·i·ty (noun) an inability to perform some or all of the tasks of daily life.]

Now how is this part of who I am? I never thought of it as a part of “Who I Am”. To me it is just part of life.

I do not like it when people tell me that I cannot do something, so I tell them watch me! The reason why I feel this way is because so much of my independence has been taken from me, due to my disability. I may run into walls, fall off of curbs and down the stairs, because I am legally blind with some sight left, but I don't let that stop me from doing things. I like asking people, “Can I drive?” They always tell me no, oh well that's life.

My disability is so much a part of me, I don't even think about it. When I apply for an office job and I sit down in front of the interviewer with my guide dog lying down sweetly beside me. The interviewer would ask me, “How can you do the job if you are disabled?” I want to say “I'm not stupid I just have a disability,” instead I set forth to prove that I can do the job. It always seems that I have to prove myself to people that I can do things. Proving myself has become something that I have to do on a daily basis.

I have had my disability for so long now that I have acclimated myself to it. I am comfortable with myself and my disability that I can laugh at myself or other when they try to help me a little too late. For example: I would run into a pillar because it was just out of my sight and I didn't take my dog with me at the time. Or people telling watch that curb after I already fell off of it and “I tell them no kidding a little late there bud on that warning.” Again that is just part of my life now.

I am who I am and my disability is just part of my life. It doesn't change who I am, it just makes me stronger.



Peckham, a community vocational organization, is a unique business and human services agency which values quality, diversity and performance. Our mission is to provide a wide range of opportunities to maximize human potential for persons striving for greater independence and self- sufficiency. We embrace collaboration, effective resource management and innovative approaches to achieve world class excellence.



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