

Projects With Industry



As we all can attest, life can put many obstacles in our path. The Projects With Industry Program is synonymous with individuals with disabilities surmounting the stumbling blocks before them and finding a richer, more independent life. Debbie's story is in line with the successes that happen in this important program. Debbie lives in Sarasota. She is a single parent with two children with disabilities. Despite her family obligations and a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis (MS), she wanted a better life for herself and her children. Through the assistance of a PWI Employment Specialist, Debbie discovered a new career that she could sink her teeth into. Even though she had no previous experience in the field, she began working on a landscaping crew for a local company. Debbie's positive personality and diligence towards her work quickly led her to stand out among her peers. Her employer immediately recognized this strong work ethic and rewarded her with a promotion to supervisor after only a few months on the job. She will soon complete her first year as a supervisor for this company. Debbie is living proof that hard working people sometimes need only a little assistance and an opportunity to get life going in the right direction. Congrats Debbie! It's great to see you blossom in your new employment landscape.

Projects with Industry at CHAC has injected a bold employment initiative to rural Southwest Florida. Expansion into Charlotte County in the past year increased the percentage of people with disabilities who were able to obtain employment assistance. This helped to decrease the numbers that continue to be affected by the economic catastrophe left in the wake of hurricane devastation from three years ago. For those without personal or reliable transportation in a community with few public transportation options, the ability to work with a PWI Specialist in Charlotte County negated the need to travel to Sarasota County to receive services. PWI Employment Specialists were able to become familiar with participants in their home communities, gain knowledge about the labor market, and skill training needs of employers.

Highlights of 2006/2007: **1)** Participants experienced a change in earnings by an average of \$309.85 per week over the average earnings at time of project entry. **91%** of PWI participants who obtained employment during the reporting period had been unemployed continuously six months or more at time of project entry. **75%** obtained full time employment; **2)** two career events were held through C-PAC (Career Planning and Advancement Club) with representatives from Sarasota County Technical Institute and the Goodwill Money Management and Homebuyers Program; **3)** PWI expanded outreach, referral and employment services within Charlotte County, an area still in recovery, regarding employment and housing due to hurricane devastation two years ago; **4)** collaborative efforts with the Charlotte, Sarasota and Manatee counties' One Stop Centers continues to be advantageous for PWI participants and One Stop Center staff.

Consumers Placed Into Employment

