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## Millville Easterseals program helps disabled find jobs

THOMAS BARLAS Staff Writer Oct 6, 2016



Dale Gerhard / staff photographer

Adrien Pender, left, a skills counselor with the Easterseals New Jersey disability employment and work center in Millville, assists Tameka Robinson as she bags bottle caps. Pender returned to the facility to help others with disabilities learn the skills they need find outside employment.



Disabled man gets license, shows driverless tech's potential



Jackie Craig, business developer for the Easter Seals in Millville and New Brunswick, talks about the organization and employment and the contribution it has on the community. Easter Seals New Jersey held an open house in their packaging facility on Bogden Boulevard in Millville, to showcase their employment for those with disabilities. Oct. 6, 2016. (Dale Gerhard/Press of Atlantic City)

Dale Gerhard



How much are homes selling for near you?

MILLVILLE — Adrien Pender spends the weekends working at a local McDonald's, cleaning the building, helping seniors get their food and assisting with children's parties.

But during the week, she returns to the place where she learned the skills necessary for the job — the Easterseals New Jersey disability employment and work center.

The 26-year-old Deerfield Township resident said it was an easy decision to become a skills counselor at the facility. Many of the 150 people with disabilities there needed her help to develop the skills necessary to make it in the workforce, she said.

"I wanted to help them, just like (people) helped me," Pender said.

The center on Bogden Boulevard held an open house Thursday, so the disabled and their family members could visit and learn about programs that could lead to paying jobs.

In the warehouse of the 22,000-square-foot building, clients were learning skills that would help them land manufacturing-related jobs. They loaded pallets, packed boxes, used shrink-wrap machines and put lids on bottles. They work on products sent to the facility by a number of companies associated with the facility. Clients get a paycheck every two weeks.

The instructional task requires patience, as the abilities of some of the clients are rather severe, said Burt Brooks, content specialist with Easterseals New Jersey.

For instance, some of the clients can't count, which makes it difficult for them to know, for instance, the number of bottles to put in a box, he said. Skills counselors solve that problem by drawing up a grid and having the clients put a bottle on each grid box, he said. The number of grid boxes corresponds to the



Retro sneakers seek, find new home in Vineland

number of bottles that must be packed, he said.

It may seem like a small step, but it's a first step in helping some of the clients learn to count, a skill needed in the workforce, Brooks said. It can take several years for a client to develop all the necessary work skills, he said.

Accomplishing those small tasks is something many nondisabled people take for granted, said Angela Mack, an organization service manager.

Clients are also instructed in basic things that can help them get and retain a job, she said. That includes time management, interview techniques, developing a resume and learning how to best communicate with supervisors and co-workers, she said.

Maryann Epright, 27, of Bridgeton, is in her sixth year at the Easterseals facility. She was busy stacking boxes on a pallet, one of the many skills she said she's learned over the years.

"I've done everything here," she said.

Epright said she knows she still has to still develop her work skills before getting a job of her own, but she is confident she'll reach that goal.

"It will come," she said.

As for Pender, she's hoping to parlay her experience with McDonald's into another job, although she's not sure what that might be.

She hopes that whatever job she gets will allow her to do what she loves.

"I want it to help (the clients) get a job, too," Pender said.

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