

[http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/top\\_three/our-view-millville-center-part-of-effective-system-helping-those/article\\_698e2002-96b7-11e6-ae3d-6b2efd3d4439.html](http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/top_three/our-view-millville-center-part-of-effective-system-helping-those/article_698e2002-96b7-11e6-ae3d-6b2efd3d4439.html)

## Our view: Millville center part of effective system helping those with disabilities work

6 hrs ago



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 outside employment.

Sometimes it's tempting to think that society and its various governments don't get much right. Maybe that's a result of the human habit of looking for what can be better, what's broken and can be fixed, what's wrong and can be made right.

There are plenty of things being done well and going great, even challenging things. One such area caught our attention earlier this month when its local operation — the Easterseals New Jersey disability employment and work center in Millville — held an open house.

24

The center trains people with disabilities, sometimes severe ones, in the skills needed to do work and hold a job. It can take years, but that's OK — clients and counselors are committed to whatever it takes. Their stories exemplify the strength of the human spirit, persevering toward success despite daunting challenges.

The satisfaction they find in being productive also offers an example to all of a perspective on work that's sometimes difficult to see and maintain. Life is doing stuff, and work is the stuff one gets paid for. It can all be fulfilling and enriching.

Perhaps the motivation of people with disabilities who want to work is why so many are able to do just that. The jobless rate for workers with a disability in 2015, the latest figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, was 10.7 percent. That's pretty good. Nearly 9 out of 10 who want work and are seeking it have jobs, which compares well with some demographic groups without disabilities.

New Jersey has been doing its share for nearly a century, since creating the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The Millville Easterseals center got started in 1980 with five employees and a few dozen clients. Now it serves 150 people with disabilities.

They learn how to communicate with co-workers and supervisors, how to manage their time, how to handle a job interview and how to make a résumé. In the 22,000-square-foot center, they learn manufacturing-related work such as sealing bottles with lids, shrink wrapping, packing boxes and loading pallets. And they get a bi-weekly paycheck, just like most people.

With 5.2 million Americans with disabilities working, what could be better?

24

Well, there are still 621,000 age 16 and older who would like to have jobs and don't. We'd like to see a vibrant, growing economy that improves the chances of finding work for them and the millions of other Americans who want to be self-sufficient.



Millville Easterseals program helps disabled find jobs