

ABC World News

(Charles Gibson) And work in progress, an employer proving disabled people will work just as hard as anyone else, if given the chance.

(Announcer) From ABC News headquarters, this is World News. Finally, tonight, an economic success story that is, more importantly, a human success story. A recent study found that the unemployment rate for American's with disabilities is 44 percent. There are laws against discrimination, but many employers still question whether disabled people can really do the job. Betsy Stark found one company with some answers.

(Betsy Stark) At first glance, this Walgreens distribution center in Anderson, South Carolina seems ordinary enough. But, look a little closer.

(Julia Turner) I tell you what, I love this job.

(Betsy Stark) And it is anything but. I have been happy with it. I'm contented and I've got people all around me that's, just the best friends I've ever had in the whole world.

(Betsy Stark) What's special about this place is that Julia Turner and more than 40 percent of her 700 coworkers are disabled. Julia has downs syndrome. Darrel Perry, who works right next to her, mentally retarded. What are these things Darrel? It tells you all kind of tips.
Oh, so these are tips on how to do your job. Do my job.

(Betsy Stark) Eric Tada has autism. Louanne Banister, one of their training supervisors, in a wheel chair. And Angela Mackey who recruited most of them--
>> You feeling better? Yeah.

(Betsy Stark) Angie has cerebral palsy. In this building, able and disabled workers do many of the same jobs and earn the same pay. Corporate America thinks they need to give somebody with a disability an easier job. Everyone here is on equal ground. Can you please take care of that for me? Yes sir.

(Betsy Stark) In this building, people with disabilities. How you doing, man?

(Betsy Stark) ...Are not invisible. When you see somebody with a disability, everybody avoids that person. Here, we come up and shake your hand. It's totally different.

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(Betsy Stark) The quiet revolution happening in Anderson is the brainchild of Walgreens executive Randy Lewis. Everything okay? [laughter]

(Betsy Stark) Lewis has a 19 year old son with autism. As a parent, I saw the future and so the question is, given our position, maybe we could be an example, maybe we could use our position of leadership to try to change the work environment.

(Betsy Stark) This is personal. Very personal, very personal.

(Betsy Stark) Lewis says Anderson is no less productive than other distribution centers. People come to me and say will this work in my environment? Yes, it will. How you doing Stephanie? This is, this is not just the good thing to do, the right thing to do, this is better. Does it make you feel good to get a pay check every week? It sure does. And if anybody needs a big check, come over here and they'll give it to you.

(Betsy Stark) But only if you earn it. Betsy Stark, ABC News, Anderson South Carolina.

(Charles Gibson) And that is World News for this Monday. I'm Charlie Gibson, and I hope you had a good day. For all of us at ABC News, have a good night.