Perfect attendance for fifteen months and pulling every box during her shift for a zero percent recirculation rate are some of Marisel Montelongo’s achievements as a general warehouse team member at our regional full case (RFC) distribution center in Pendergrass, Ga. “Marisel is a quick learner and has a great attitude,” says Jose Soto, function manager. “There’s nothing she won’t do to assist the team. Her dedication has helped her earn a 100 percent productivity rate in the ‘Bringing Out the Best’ program.”

Montelongo, who has a developmental disability, received education and training through Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR). She participated in an employ-ability skills class, earned a special education diploma and kept up an active job search. Through a partnership between VR and the Pendergrass RFC, Montelongo has found the right place to use her skills in the shipping department, where she has been a full-time team member since January 2009. Her duties include pulling cases off a conveyor belt and loading them into trucks headed for retail stores.

Although Montelongo says the work is hard, she takes pride in earning a paycheck and spending money on hobbies and interests. “I take karate lessons and have a green belt,” says Montelongo. She also enjoys buying gifts for her family, shopping for CDs and saving money for trips.

At the warehouse, Montelongo says one of her favorite activities is the safety celebration barbecue that takes place when her team achieves their monthly safety goals. “I always look forward to that,” she says. “It’s fun to eat hot dogs and hamburgers with co-workers to celebrate.”

GrowAbility

Our goal is to fill 10 percent of our production jobs with people who have disabilities in 2010. Here’s where we stand as of July 1, 2010.

EASY ACCESS

Tips, resources and websites about disabilities

The agencies and organizations highlighted in these websites provide support and services to help individuals with disabilities find employment. Each website also provides success stories about workers with disabilities.

https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/oeps/providers/ns/bystate

The disability section of the Social Security site directs workers with special needs to vocational rehabilitation, training, job referrals and other ongoing support and services. The site includes a glossary, FAQs, publications and information about local events.

www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com

The Think Beyond the Label site makes a business case for employing people with disabilities. It dispels myths about employees with disabilities and lists local agencies that match qualified workers with disabilities to the right employers.

www.disability.gov/employment

Click the “Employing People with Disabilities” link in the left column of this web page to find resources for workplace accommodations, occupational safety and assistive technology for workers with disabilities. The site also features 60-second videos that illustrate positive images of people with disabilities at work.

Rand Lewis, senior vice president of Supply Chain and Logistics, answers your questions. If you have a distribution question, send it to ask.randly@walgreens.com.

Q: How does Walgreens exceed the requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act?

A: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebrates its 20th anniversary on July 26. This landmark legislation has significantly changed the way people with disabilities are viewed in our communities, schools and workplaces, and protects their civil rights. I’m proud to say that we exceed many of the ADA requirements.

For example, our distribution centers have incorporated iconology to communicate through familiar symbols. That’s why we identify each workstation with a number and a picture of a familiar item, such as snack foods in Receiving, for team members who recognize pictures better than numbers.

Other examples are the aids we use during forklift training. Through videos, special classes for employees who are deaf, and one-on-one instruction, workers with disabilities are able to successfully achieve their certification in forklift operation.

As the ADA celebrates its 20th anniversary with events around the country, I see this as an opportunity to reconnect ourselves to hiring people with disabilities and identifying what they can do – not what they can’t.