

# Partners with Business:

## Randy's Neighborhood Market and Employment Resources, Inc.

February 2020

In November 2018, Brian Gamroth landed his first permanent job after high school as a grocery stocker at Randy's Neighborhood Market in Whitehall with the help of a job developer, Kim Reese, from Employment Resources, Inc. (ERI). Prior to this, he was involved with Project SEARCH and had a couple of temporary jobs. Brian works on "truck days," Tuesdays and Fridays from 8am to 1pm. When Brian first started, he had a job coach with him throughout his shift to provide support to learn his job duties and stay on task. Over time, the coach began to fade but as that happened Brian would experience difficulty staying on task.

Wanting Brian to succeed, Kim and Brian's manager, Keri Salzwedel, talked over various strategies, one being Partners with Business coworker supports, through which ERI could reimburse Randy's for designating a coworker to provide the extra workplace supports Brian needs to be successful, rather than having an outside job coach involved. This appealed to Keri because consistency in job coaching staff was an issue for both Brian and the business at times. Coaches would turn over or vary in their job coaching styles.



Kim had noticed one employee in particular, Amanda Gill, who was a good fit with Brian, and Keri agreed. Together, they figured out when Brian needed additional supports and negotiated a Partners with Business Agreement to provide the reimbursement to Randy's for the time that Amanda provides him with support. The reimbursement is based on Amanda's wage and overhead, not a job coach rate.

It took Brian a bit to get comfortable being supported by a coworker instead of a job coach but now, Keri says the arrangement is working out well. Amanda works alongside or nearby Brian. She helps him fill his cart with the right products and gives him reminders to stay on task. She provides support for about 50% of the time he's at work, the other 50% he works independently on other tasks like the cardboard crusher, which he loves to do. Amanda says it has been fun to watch him grow at work and that he has taught her so much about autism. She loves her job even more because she gets to work with him. "He makes us happy," Keri says, and she

appreciates his upbeat attitude and his precise, meticulous work style.



**The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) mission is to help people with developmental disabilities become independent, productive, and included in all facets of community life.**

*ERI is a Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (WI BPDD) Partners with Business Grantee. Wisconsin Act 323 established the WI BPDD's Partners with Business initiative in 2018 to help businesses who are interested in meeting their workforce needs by hiring and supporting people with disabilities. Through the Partners with Business initiative, employers and supported employment service providers learn how to implement best practices in hiring and supporting workers with disabilities and, if the worker needs additional support above and beyond what is typically provided by an employer, the employer can receive funding to provide this extra support. The funding for the reimbursement to the employer comes from the long-term care system (through Family Care or IRIS). The service provider is responsible for receiving that funding, reimbursing the business, and checking in monthly with the employer and employee to provide follow-along services, as needed. For more information about the Partners with Business initiative, visit: <https://wi-bpdd.org/index.php/partners-with-business/>*