

MONROE MOTOR PRODUCTS

Parts Plus-Auto Parts
Distribution Warehouse



LOCATION:

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK



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SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN AN HVRP GRANTEE AND A LOCAL EMPLOYER

Grantees in the U.S. Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) help Veterans who experience homelessness reintegrate into competitive employment. In Rochester, NY, an HVRP grantee called the Veterans Outreach Center has established a successful, longstanding relationship with Monroe Motor Products, a local employer that considers hiring Veterans to be part of its mission. Their partnership highlights best practices in putting Veterans to work.

Nena Siverd and Jan Goldberg could have written the book on creating successful job development partnerships on behalf of Veterans. Ms. Siverd is Employment Manager at Veterans Outreach Center (VOC), an HVRP grantee that offers a comprehensive set of supportive services to Veterans in Rochester, NY. Mr. Goldberg is Operations Manager at the Monroe Motor Products' Rochester facility, an auto parts store and distribution warehouse within walking distance of the VOC. Together, Ms. Siverd and Mr. Goldberg have forged a long-term relationship that benefits both parties and, ultimately, the Veterans they are honored to serve.

VOC has been in business for 41 years; its Employment Resource Center helps Veterans reenter the workforce. Veterans have access to a full range of services for housing, education, employment, and wellness. Monroe Motor Products is based in Rochester and serves customers across New York State and Pennsylvania. It has approximately 100 employees in the Rochester metro area and 80 additional employees in other locations throughout its marketing area. The employees hold jobs that range from driving and working in the warehouse to administration and accounting. When Mr. Goldberg has an opening, Ms. Siverd is the first person he calls. Their 15-year partnership is built on trust and mutual respect.

Creating Successful Partnerships: Tips for Success



Employment development specialists working with Veterans can develop successful partnerships with employers by following these recognized tips for success:

- **Meet employers in person.** Tour their facility and ask questions such as “What type of person would be successful here?”
- **Look for employers that are mission driven.** Seek those that are Veteran run or that make it a part of their mission to hire Veterans. Smaller employers and those that consider themselves socially conscious may be receptive to hiring your clients.
- **Describe the benefits you offer.** Mention that you prescreen applicants, match them to appropriate jobs, and offer post-placement support.
- **Make a successful match.** Know the employers’ needs and your jobseekers’ skills. Don’t send someone who isn’t a good fit.
- **Prepare job candidates.** Provide or refer them to training in both occupational and soft skills (e.g., punctuality, appropriate attire, work ethic, etc.). Prepare them for interviews and help them highlight their strengths.
- **Offer ongoing support to Veterans and employers.** Work with Veterans to address issues (e.g., substance use) that interfere with success on the job. Recognize that sometimes a placement doesn’t work, and resolve to learn from these experiences.

“Initially, I went there and toured their facility,” Ms. Siverd says. “It feels like family there; they’re good to their employees.” Because she took the time to meet Mr. Goldberg in person, the two were able to discuss what makes a Veteran a good fit for a job within Monroe Motor Products. “Nena started tailoring the candidates to the job,” Mr. Goldberg explains. “She doesn’t just send the next person who walks through the door. If she doesn’t have the right candidate, she will say so.” Ms. Siverd agrees. “You have to make a good match,” she says. “Look at the individual Veteran’s skill set, the goals they’re trying to achieve.”

However, knowing what an employer needs and finding a Veteran who fits the bill is only the beginning. VOC also gives Veterans the tools needed to succeed.

“We give them a leg up and better skill sets,” Ms. Siverd says. The VOC Employment Resource Center operates The Colonel Robert N. Abbott Veterans Community Technology Center, which provides occupational skills, remedial, life skills, and job readiness training to eligible Veterans. VOC also enjoys partnerships with community organizations that provide job training and supportive services for Veterans, including the Rochester Office of Adult Career Educational Services and the local American Jobs Center, otherwise known as the one-stop career center, Rochester Works!

Life skills are as important as technical skills, Mr. Goldberg notes. He is confident that the candidates Ms. Siverd sends will be clean and sober before starting work. Ms. Siverd is open about any issues that may arise with a particular job candidate, and she encourages Veterans to be upfront with potential employers.

“When **Veterans** experience barriers, sometimes it’s because they don’t believe in themselves,” Ms. Siverd says. “We help them learn to take the negative and make it a positive.” VOC places some 140 Veterans a year into competitive jobs, including several each year at Monroe Motor Products. Some stay with the company for as long as a decade.

For his part, Mr. Goldberg treats his Veteran employees like any other; he makes his expectations clear and expects those to be met. Still, he goes out of his way to make a match successful. He starts people out as part-time employees so they can demonstrate their ability to get to work on time (the company provides bus passes to those who need them), learn their job, and acclimate to their co-workers and the environment. After 30 to 90 days, if a person shows initiative, Mr. Goldberg extends the offer to fulltime, with health care benefits, paid leave, and opportunity for advancement. He expects all other employees and managers to be supportive of Veteran employees, and he believes in second chances.

“They **Monroe Motor Products** call us if a person is having a problem, and bring them to our door,” Ms. Siverd says. “That’s the way you want this to work.” VOC then helps the Veteran address his or her issues, including making referrals for mental health or substance abuse treatment, if appropriate. Still, despite the best of intentions, sometimes a candidate isn’t the right fit.

“We don’t see these situations as failures,” Mr. Goldberg says. “Not all placements can work out.” Because he and Ms. Siverd have a close working relationship, they discuss what went wrong and how to improve the placement process.

Monroe Motor Products is just one of the local employers with whom VOC works. In addition to reaching out to individual employers, VOC does onsite recruitment events. They hold the largest job expo in the area, with more than 100 employers paying a fee to participate in this event to recruit and employ Veterans.

“Our employers are very connected to us,” Ms. Siverd says. She credits this to the fact that her employment specialists are passionate about their work and strong advocates for both Veterans and local employers. “It’s a win-win,” she says, “with strong partnerships, trust, and a ‘say what you mean’ approach. Because we deliver, we have a good reputation.”

> Click here for a video: http://youtu.be/TpfRm7_bCv8



Mr. Goldberg is equally committed to this partnership.

Monroe Motor Products was founded by a Navy Veteran and has been privately owned for three generations. “We want to give back to the community,” Mr. Goldberg says. He acknowledges that hiring a Veteran who has been homeless may take more work than hiring someone without these challenges, but adds, “It’s worth it, because we can ‘pay it forward.’”

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