

Wendy Millar

Scanning Co-ordinator - TSC Stores, Brockville

Wendy's employment goals were straight forward and to the point from the get go; she desired to work for a business that could offer a positive work environment, with low stress and a strong sense of community. She specifically targeted TSC as a potential employer based on her positive customer experiences upon visits to the store. She applied, and then reapplied until being granted an interview. Her determination was fuelled by her supports at the EEC and Northern Lights; two local agencies that provided everything from resume writing seminars, to step by step instructions on how to respond to the "I've been called, now what do I do?" dilemma.

Looking for only casual to part time hours as part of her plan for a successful re-integration to the work place, she was well suited to an upcoming position at TSC that was able to accommodate such a schedule. Upon being interviewed, it was discovered that she would be a shoe-in for the job as it required two of her strongest skill sets; that of attention to detail, and thoroughness.

Wendy is now approaching her one year with TSC, and is as enthused about her job as the day she was hired. Being given the chance to re-enter the workplace after a prolonged absence, she is extremely grateful for the opportunities and supports she has found within the community that help her along the way. She wants to take this chance to share her story and perhaps alleviate some of the stigma surrounding the hiring of individuals living with mental illness. Although it is absolutely true that an individual suffering from an untreated illness of any kind can be a liability to a business, it is as equally true that once that individual receives the proper diagnosis, successful treatment and is able to utilize the supports being offered, that that individual may likely turn out to be your best employee on the payroll. Wendy's journey to wellness has given her an "attitude of gratitude" for all she has in her life today, in particular, her employment with TSC.

Once being rendered virtually unemployable due to her illnesses unpredictable nature and difficulty in treating, she now approaches her job with a fierce commitment to being the very best she can be everyday. She does not take for granted the opportunity she has been given, and truly sees employment today as a privilege. Is there by chance room within your company for a dedicated employee such as this?

In Wendy's 11 months with TSC, working a Monday to Friday schedule, she has missed a total of only 8 hours time due to her illness. With the help of her supports, her treatment plan, and most importantly her confidence in her employers' open and understanding attitude, she was back to work within the week and as productive as ever. The full disclosure option when hiring a person with a disability can prove beneficial for all parties involved when a 'blip' in the road to recovery such as this arises. Wendy says that knowing every single day – good or bad, that she has the support of her Employment Liaison and her employer, makes a world of difference to someone trying to manage a difficult illness. That together they have developed job retention strategies and that these have been openly discussed, are all factors in reducing the stressors that can contribute to a recurrence of symptoms.

It should be noted that mood disorders are not exclusive to these needs by any means. When these types of accommodations are implemented with mutual understanding and respect, they all stand to play a role in the success of the individuals' overall employment sustainability. Together, these strategies serve to create a stigma free relationship between employer/employee, and everyone benefits from this.

Submitted by W. Millar