



## NEWS RELEASE

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## 2017 DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION AWARDS

*Photos are available using the following link. <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2xBFyMYzo75czktWVpyZnhfMVE>.*

Two Nebraska VR partners received awards for their role in creating inclusive workplaces and advocacy for disability employment during a ceremony October 10 at the State Capitol.

### **Champion for Disability Employment and Inclusion Award: Judy Daniell**

Judy Daniell, owner of Ricardo's Mexican Restaurant in Norfolk, NE, has been a Nebraska VR disability employment partner for more than 10 years. She works closely with Nebraska VR staff to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities by customizing jobs to match an individual's strengths, skills, and abilities. Through staff training, she has created an inclusive culture at the restaurant where all team members are appreciated and valued for their unique assets. Judy goes the extra mile to help clients be successful by implementing accommodation checklists for dishwashing, food preparation, and table bussing. These tools are used for job shadows, work-based learning experiences, and direct hires.

### **Strategic Partnership for Disability Employment and Inclusion Award: Old Chicago**

Old Chicago began working with Nebraska VR in April of 2017 after Regional Manager Scott Parrill learned about employment services for businesses at a Project SEARCH information night. From the beginning the company has been on board in fostering an inclusive workplace by training the restaurant group's seven General Managers in Omaha and Lincoln regarding the business need for the partnership. The leadership group checks in regularly to ensure managers discuss abilities and strengths of Nebraska VR clients and to make accommodations when necessary. Opportunities have been made available to individuals with autism, mental health disabilities, physical limitations, and developmental disabilities. The company has offered opportunities to both student and adult clients by providing work-based learning experiences, part-time positions, informational interviews, and will host career pathway tours this school year.

"It is an honor to recognize an individual and a business who have embraced inclusion to build successful Nebraska workplaces," Nebraska Education Commissioner Matt Blomstedt said. "We also recognize you for your willingness to give back to your community by assisting others." Blomstedt also

recognized Nebraska VR staff members who work to help individuals return to work, build businesses, and live independently in their communities.

"Judy Daniell and our partners at Old Chicago recognize the need to foster inclusive workplaces to meet their hiring needs while providing opportunities to individuals with the strengths and abilities to get the job done," Nebraska Education Deputy Commissioner and Nebraska VR Director Mark Schultz noted. "Their dedication and persistence is a model for others. The recognition they are receiving today is well deserved."

The Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council selected the recipients from nominees submitted by Nebraska VR Business Account Managers and Placement Specialists. The awards are presented during October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The Council is comprised of individuals who have an interest in working with VR to ensure that the needs of Nebraskans who experience a disability are met in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

The 2017 Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards highlight the successful partnership between Nebraska VR and the businesses and communities they serve. Nebraska VR offers individualized programs to help people with disabilities find employment consistent with their interests, priorities, strengths, talents and choices while working with businesses to find and keep quality employees. Nebraska VR is a division of the Nebraska Department of Education. To learn more about Nebraska VR, visit the website at: <http://vr.nebraska.gov/>.

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