



Another Story by Stride...

"ASSEMBLED BY VADEN"

Stride, Inc. manufactures and distributes office products - BUT - Stride is not your average business! A small, woman-owned business, Stride's goal is to provide the consumer with exceptional office products alongside a mission to provide successful training and employment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

At Stride, we refer to Vaden as a "Super Employee!" On a daily basis, Vaden thanks us for hiring him! How many employers get to hear that every day? He loves working at Stride and says it's his favorite job ever. At Stride he has friends and earns a paycheck. Vaden is always eager to increase his hours and never fails to volunteer to assist with an activity. For Vaden - it is simple; Stride is like family and when he has a problem someone is always willing to help him. Vaden has been a valued employee for many years.

Voted most "Friendly Boy" in high school, Vaden was not born with a congenital disability. He attended two years of Business College before health issues took him on a downward turn that eventually led to his disability. Today Vaden lives semi-independently with thanks to a transitional living service. Vaden has a great sense of humor and the unique ability to turn any situation into a positive one - always punctuated with laughter.



One of Vaden's first jobs was at Sonic Drive-in where he recounts the time he cooked and delivered a hamburger minus the patty! His giggles increase as he describes how the customer was halfway through their meal before noticing the missing hamburger patty. Because customer service is intrinsic to Vaden's nature, the meal was replaced promptly with an apology and a smile.

Vaden's other interests include bowling, movies, computer games and especially, Facebook, which he says with a twinkle in his eye, "I can have people 'friend' me." One of six siblings, Vaden is especially appreciative of the help his sister, Leanne, gives him.

When asked about his favorite job at Stride, Vaden responds with a smile, "All of them! I do like the hand assembly of pens and am glad that we don't have machines making the pens." We agree with Vaden and prioritize products that have hands-on applications over items that come off machines readymade.

Vaden is appreciative of his job which he makes apparent... as his colleagues; we are the ones who should be grateful for his steadfast commitment to Stride! We hope you've enjoyed Vaden's story.





THE STRIDE STORY

*How one woman with a vision for
"Special People" built a business!*

Barbara Brennan had a child who was born with hydrocephalus, blind by the time he was two, his short but full life ended shortly before his eighth birthday. The outgrowth of this personal experience sent the Brennan clan in a different direction. Working with the developmentally disabled became a way of life.

In 1988 the Brennan's purchased RC Ink, a sheltered workshop making pens and renamed it Stride, Inc. (Stride). Early on, the decision was made to transition the business from a not-for-profit organization to a for-profit corporation. The Stride name worked because their disabled employees were making strides in their development and quest for independence.

Developmentally disabled people come from all walks of life and all types of heritage. No area of the population is immune. Often they become dependent on the government for support. They can be productive members of society and be taxpayers rather than tax burdens. In the years Stride has employed people with disabilities; over 200 have outgrown the pen factory and are now employed in the community – fortified with high self esteem and skills learned at Stride.

Stride knows that working, mastering a task, gaining a skill, is the best builder of self-esteem in the world. Some workers will stay at Stride forever, but a task, a skill, a place where a person can succeed can always be found. Some may cut ties to federal help completely. Others need a combination of employment and aid. The important thing is having a job to go to each day.

Stride believes in the successful training and employment of the developmentally disabled; building self-esteem, a good work ethic and an employment history for disabled workers to enable them to compete in the community workforce.

Work hours are flexible to accommodate transportation and other unique needs of Stride's disabled workers. Through the years, business decisions were always made with Stride employees in mind. When Stride had to move, a new location was chosen on a bus route so the workers could get to work easily.

When the decision was made to become a for-profit corporation, Stride shifted the pen manufacturing business from a "government sheltered" set aside business to "head-to-head" competition with Avery, Uniball, Sanford, Pentel and the like. This decision has been successful with continual growth for Stride.

Stride, as a supplier of writing instruments to the federal government, was asked by GSA to provide them with a rollerball pen. Stride purchased the rollerball tips from Schneider Writing Instruments in Germany. The two companies formed a close and trusting relationship. In 1993, Stride and Schneider signed a partnership agreement in Germany for Stride to be Schneider's exclusive agent in the United States. More importantly, Schneider executives informed Stride that they believed in, and would never interfere with, the mission of employment of the disabled. In 2000, Stride partnered with the Davis Group in Canada to sell their QuickFit binders in the United States market. The Davis Group also believes in Stride's mission and has successfully added to Stride's product line.

As the importance for diversity suppliers came into the purchasing arena, Stride became certified as a small, woman-owned business (MWBE), employing disabled people. This has led to Stride's inclusion in major office product catalogues through their Diversity Programs.

Stride's growth and reputation has been a factor in their survival and success, as well as their embracing the "green" philosophy when manufacturing. Stride only chooses suppliers who also think green. Stride's philosophy is to supply customers with the highest quality products available at competitive prices, while employing their very valuable personnel.