



Another Stride Story . . .

"SHIPPED BY VICTOR"

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.

Victor was just out of high school when he first started working at Stride, Inc. RC Inc., a vocational rehab, helped him obtain a job interview which he remembers distinctly. Diagnosed with a communication disorder Victor didn't speak much when he came to Stride. The founder lovingly recalls that she didn't hear him utter a word for the first few years. Today, Victor will counter with "I just didn't know you yet!" His first job at Stride was at the Quality Assurance tables. After a time he was assigned to a machine and became an Assistant Machine Operator and eventually a Machine Operator with his own assistant.



On the operational side of Stride, Victor has done virtually every job. Today Victor communicates just fine... he has to! *Victor is the head of our Shipping and Receiving Department* and has a crew dependant on his ability to communicate! A salaried employee, this Albuquerque native is a fully fledged member of the management team and is one of the best examples of what makes Stride a special workplace. Hard work and determination got Victor to this position, it wasn't easy and it didn't happen overnight but he's developed into a manager with skills that would benefit him in any workplace. He has accomplished this on his own, without the benefit of government subsidies.

When Victor started at Stride, there were no computers, everything was done by hand and he recalls with chagrin the paper trail that followed his every task and a manager he fondly called "Mrs. Perfectionist" who made him write it up again if it wasn't right. He's thankful for the technology that makes his job easier and has eliminated the use of carbon copy paper!

With a crew of developmentally disabled adults working for him, Victor smiles when asked how he manages his special workforce. "They are all different, all unique in their abilities, and my job is to help them be successful and to remember to check their work before taping the boxes!" There has been no special training for Victor, it's all on the job experience and a bit of personal experience because he used to be in their shoes. His biggest challenge is finding hands on work for his colleagues.

Working at Stride is fun. Our worktables are punctuated with laughter and a sense of belonging to something important. Victor, part of the family since 1984, is more than a Manager to his team. He frequently helps his crew with the minor maintenance or technology problems they have at home and does it not just voluntarily but nonchalantly.

Stride is grateful to have Victor as part of their management team. We hope you have enjoyed Victor's success story and will think of him when your orders are shipped!





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.