
THE Hire News

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A BEACON OF HOPE THROUGH ADVOCACY

BY RUTH COWAN

SourceAmerica | Celebrating 50 Years

Job hunting is not for the faint of heart. At best, your search is short, and you find a job you can be passionate about. However, for those with disabilities, finding employment can be a stressful pursuit. The empowerment that a nonprofit such as Pacific Coast Community Services (PCCS) provides, advocating on their behalf, can make a significant difference in someone finding meaningful employment. PCCS, a SourceAmerica affiliate, works tirelessly to ensure clients' career goals are met, inspiring hope and a sense of empowerment.

SourceAmerica is a nonprofit organization whose primary goal is to “create jobs by building strong partnerships with the federal government and connecting our customers to industry-leading products and services, according to their website. SourceAmerica achieves this in part through the AbilityOne program. They are one of two nonprofits designated to assist nonprofits. SourceAmerica’s mission is to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities by securing federal contracts through the AbilityOne program.

According to the AbilityOne website, “the AbilityOne program is one of the largest sources of employment for people with disabilities in the United States.” More than 420 nonprofits participate in the AbilityOne program, and each must be affiliated with one of two central nonprofit agencies, such as SourceAmerica.

Their mission: to “tap into America’s underutilized workforce of individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities to deliver high quality, mission-essential products and services to federal agencies in quality employment opportunities,” as stated on their fact sheet. They employ almost 60,000 people who are disabled.

As a person with a visual impairment, I understand the specific challenges in attaining meaningful employment. Having organizations such as PCCS and SourceAmerica advocating for me and thousands of other individuals with disability is a game changer. It is comforting to know that PCCS has been able to employ

80% of its clients through the AbilityOne program. They have achieved this success through the support and advocacy of SourceAmerica. The support given to PCCS by SourceAmerica doesn’t stop with employment support. They also provide training and grants for affiliate nonprofits and advocate the procurement process.

SourceAmerica goes a step beyond through its Xforce conference each year. This conference is not just a gathering but a community of support and learning. During the conference, attendees can participate in training programs, network with others, and learn of public policies and new regulations that may affect their nonprofit and its clients. The connections made don’t end when the conference is over. Many nonprofits go on to have lasting relationships that allow further growth, fostering a sense of community and shared mission.

At this year’s Xforce conference, PCCS was privileged to have three staff members in attendance: Lawrence Silva, Chief Operating Officer; Adrian Bryant, Chief Administration Officer; and Shawn Jones, a vital part of mailroom operations. Through their unique insight, training and networking at the conference, what they brought back will continue to propel PCCS, giving its clients even more opportunities.

With further growth in mind, SourceAmerica continues its advocacy through its Grassroots Advocacy conference, held each year in Washington, D.C. The conference allows employees with disabilities and their families, along with employers in SourceAmerica’s network of nonprofits, to share their own stories with congressional members and highlight how policies enacted in Washington, D.C., impact them and their employment choices at the local and personal level.

Because of advocacy partners like SourceAmerica, PCCS can hold itself to the highest standards and allow its clients to fulfill their career goals. Please visit their websites if you would like more information on SourceAmerica, the AbilityOne program, or the Xforce conference. ■

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MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP: LAWRENCE SILVA



I am proud to provide an update on Pacific Coast Community Services (PCCS) as we continue to provide our clients with support to gain employment and attain their vocational goals. Our organization continues to grow and develop programming and services that create training and employment in many industry sectors. Our dedicated leadership and staff continue to develop and implement innovative training and employment services, leading to numerous successful outcomes for the clients we serve.

As we move into the final quarter of 2024, PCCS is in the final stages of implementing new training programs in gardening/landscaping, computer basics and CompTIA. Our curriculum team, led by Frank Silva, PCCS Training Coordinator, is in the final stages of implementation, and new instructors have been identified to lead the coursework when it is ready. Additionally, Andrea Gyurancsik, our new Employment Coordinator, is now leading a strong team of job developers and job coaches who continue to provide quality services to assist our job seekers attain their vocational goals. Utilizing a variety of employment services to include adult work experience and internships, direct job placement services and weekly job club meetings, our clients have many resources available to reach their employment goals.

Our Chief Administration Officer, Adrion Bryant, has earned his SHRM-CP certification after successfully completing his training and passing all the required exams. Adrion has done an outstanding job of restructuring and improving our existing human resources systems while continuing to manage and oversee all of our AbilityOne government contracts. Adrion continues to successfully recruit and onboard new staff while effectively managing all human resources responsibilities for our organization.

PCCS continues to partner with other non-profits in the community to include the Native American Health Center and the REAP Climate Center. Our shared vision and collaboration with these organizations has included 25 youth successfully completing a summer internship program in nature-based systems at the REAP Climate Center while also developing work experience and direct placement results for participants in various programs that are offered through our partnership with these respected organizations. REAP Climate Center and PCCS are continuing to develop and offer new training programs in nature-based systems this fall that will allow our clients to gain specific industry skills and experience leading to employment in climate change and environmental work.

I am honored to announce that both Shawn Jones, our Mailroom Supervisor, and I will be attending the SourceAmerica Grassroots Conference in Washington D.C. to represent PCCS and advocate for employment for individuals with disabilities. The conference will provide our organization with the opportunity to meet with our local legislators and provide details on our programs and services. During the conference, Shawn and I will attend and speak at advocacy meetings, where we will champion policy and employment choices for our local disabled community.

Pacific Coast Community Services already has accomplished many of the goals and objectives set for 2024. I am confident our committed leadership team and staff will build on our previous success and continue to provide quality services to our clients in the future. Our strategic plan includes developing new and groundbreaking employment and training programs that align with our mission and create positive outcomes for the clients we serve. ■



**Pacific Coast
Community Services**

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PCCS CLIENT SUCCESS STORY: MARY JANELLE

BY RUTH COWAN



Nothing is more fulfilling than hearing an inspirational story, especially about someone achieving their dreams. My heart is always warmed when I hear about someone who perseveres and finds success. Mary-Janelle Nichols inspired me in just this way.

Nichols learned the value of perseverance and determination from her parents, who were both hard workers. Her father, a custodian, and her mother, an office manager and teacher at a middle school, instilled a strong work ethic in her. Their commitment to their careers was a model for her own, and she carried that same level of commitment into pursuing her career goals.

Holding a Bachelor of Arts in Human Development from California State University, East Bay, and an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education, Nichols was well on her way to achieving her career goals. As a Pacific Coast Community Services (PCCS) client receiving support with employment services, her determination continued as she applied for over 100 jobs. Her frustration grew as she shared that she had participated in 30 interviews without a job offer.

Listening to her, I could hear the discouragement and frustration as she shared that she did not get a response after the interviews. As someone with no vision, her career choice left potential employers concerned that she could not fulfill the position's duties. Nichols suspected potential employers considered her a liability due to her disability.

At this point, Nichols was losing hope when she was invited to interview for the After-School Program Leader position at Ashland Village with Eden Housing. As with previous interviews, she was not expecting a positive outcome. When she received a call for a second interview, she shared that she asked them if they had the

right person. As a woman who grew up in after-school programs, she had a unique experience that went along with her education.

For once, they looked past her visual impairment and saw what an asset she would be to the program. They offered her the job. I can only imagine how pleased she must have felt. Finally, all her hard work and determination paid off. The program leaders saw her for the amazing person she is and the value she brings to the children who attend the program.

Because of my own visual impairment, I am well aware of Nichols's struggles in her job search. We, as people with disabilities, know what we are capable of. We bring with us a rare determination and commitment. Having potential employers see our capabilities is where the issue lies.

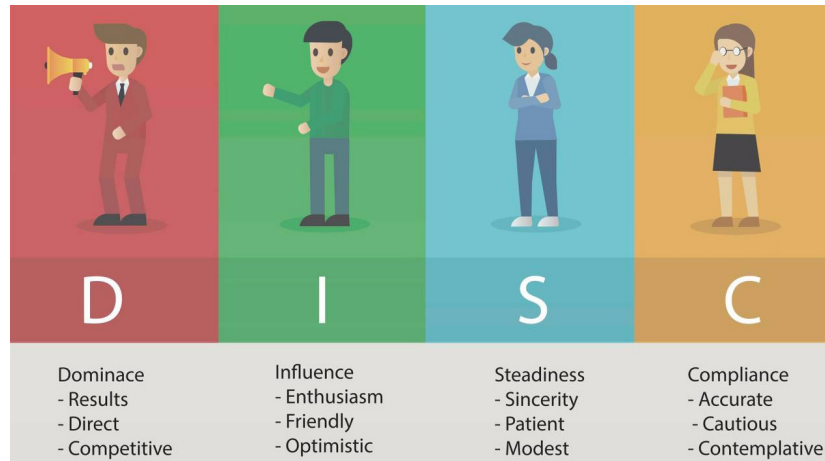
I am in awe of Mary-Janelle Nichols. She is the perfect example of the determination and hard work ethic her parents instilled in her. Her success is a beacon of hope for those with disabilities searching for employment. ■



Home is just the beginning

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF AND OTHERS IN JOB SEARCH AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

BY OTTO DELEON



Navigating the job market can be daunting. For individuals with disabilities, veterans, and those re-entering the workforce, the challenges can be particularly formidable. At PCCS, we understand that finding the right job isn't just about matching skills and experience with job descriptions. It's also about understanding oneself and how to interact effectively with others in the workplace. Drawing upon extensive research in personality, cognitive and developmental psychology, psychometrics, sociology, behavioral science and other leading fields, PCCS incorporates DiSC personality assessments into our portfolio of client services.

So, what is DiSC? It's a powerful tool that categorizes behavior into four primary personality types: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. Each type has its own unique strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement. By understanding these personality types, individuals can gain insights into their own social and intellectual proclivities as well as those of others.

For our clients, the DiSC assessment serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it provides valuable self-awareness. Understanding whether one naturally gravitates towards leadership roles (Dominance), thrives on social interactions (Influence), prefers steady and predictable environments (Steadiness), or excels in analytical tasks (Conscientiousness) can be eye-opening. This self-knowledge can guide clients in their job search, helping them to target roles that align with their natural strengths.

For example, a client with a high Conscientiousness score may find fulfillment in roles that require attention to detail and systematic work, such as accounting or data analysis. Conversely, a client with a high Influence score might excel in positions that involve teamwork and communication, such as sales or customer service.

Understanding one's own personality type is only part of the equation. The DiSC assessment also helps clients understand how to interact with people who have different personality types. This is crucial for building effective working relationships and fostering a positive work environment.

For instance, a client with a Dominance personality may need to learn to be patient and understanding when

working with someone who scores high in Steadiness and prefers a more methodical and cautious approach. Similarly, an individual with an Influence personality might need to focus on being more detail-oriented when collaborating with someone who has a Conscientiousness personality.

Personality assessments are also beneficial for individuals who are engaged in professional networking, either for job search purposes or career development. The insights gained from the assessment tools can be leveraged to interact more effectively and authentically with recruiters, hiring managers, business owners, community leaders, and perfect strangers. For those engaged in active job hunts, effective networking has the potential to open channels to work opportunities that haven't or never officially get posted on a job board.

Personality assessments are also valuable for those looking to grow professionally. Understanding one's own strengths and how to leverage them can be a key factor in securing promotions. Additionally, being able to adapt one's communication and working style to different colleagues and supervisors can enhance workplace relationships and open doors to new opportunities.

At PCCS, we provide our clients with the tools they need to succeed, not only by helping them find jobs but also by equipping them with the knowledge to thrive in their chosen career paths. The DiSC assessment is a cornerstone of this approach, fostering self-awareness, enhancing interpersonal skills, and ultimately contributing to a more open and supportive workplace environment.

The journey to employment and career advancement is deeply personal and varies from one individual to another. By incorporating DiSC personality assessments into our services, PCCS is committed to providing tailored support that recognizes the unique social and intellectual proclivities of each client. We believe that understanding oneself and others is a critical step towards achieving professional success and building a fulfilling career.

For more information about PCCS services, please visit our website at www.pccsonline.org. Together, we can unlock potential and create opportunities for everyone. ■

ADA TITLE 1: YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

BY RUTH COWAN



Having a disability can present challenges, especially when looking for employment or carrying out one's job duties if currently employed. This article focuses on understanding Title 1 of the ADA and the laws and regulations that support individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment or are currently employed.

Until 1990, there were no real protections for those with disabilities. Fortunately, the ADA was signed into law, ensuring that individuals with disabilities have the same constitutional rights as those without disabilities. Title 1 of the ADA was created to ensure that those with disabilities had fair and equal access to employment.

Title 1 "prohibits private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies, and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment," as specified on the ADA website. What does this mean for someone with a disability, and what do employers need to know about Title 1?

Knowing your rights and responsibilities is crucial for both employers and those seeking employment or currently working. It can alleviate frustration, confusion, and compliance issues in the future. Below is a summary to ensure employers and employees are well-informed.

Employers and Recruiters

While many employers know their responsibilities under ADA Title 1, there can still be some confusion. One of the biggest myths is that under the ADA, employers may be required to hire someone with a disability who is not qualified for a specific position. This is not the case. According to the Department of Labor, a person with a disability cannot claim discrimination if they are not qualified. They must be able to perform all the essential functions of the job, with or without accommodation.

While employers are free to hire any qualified applicant, their decision must not consider a person's disability. When considering applicants, remember that someone with a disability is not receiving privileges or special accommodations. Reasonable accommodation is required. This means that a reasonable accommodation allows them to be equal to their coworkers, not superior.

Employers are often concerned about the cost of accommodations. In many cases, accommodations are free, and those that may cost more can be offset through

tax incentives. This includes incentives that cover the cost of making the business accessible.

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) can be a valuable resource for employers who are unsure of ADA Title 1 or who want more information. "JAN provides free and confidential consultation for employers of all sizes and types," according to their website.

Employees and Employment Seekers

Knowing your rights and responsibilities is just as crucial for those currently employed or seeking employment. The ADA Title 1 is not a guarantee of employment. You still need to be qualified for the position for which you are applying. ADA Title 1 only guarantees fair treatment and reasonable accommodation to allow you to do the job for which you were hired.

For those looking for employment, it is against the law for a potential employer to ask if you have a disability or require you to take a physical during the application process. However, once you receive a job offer, the employer can ask you to take a physical and inquire if you can complete the essential job duties.

If you are offered the job, "the law allows an employer to condition the job offer on the applicant answering disability-related questions and/or successfully passing a medical exam," according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). You cannot be singled out. The same practice must be applied to all new employees. The job offer may be revoked if you cannot perform the duties even with accommodations.

Once employed, your employer may ask disability-related questions or require a physical only if they pertain to your requested accommodation. The law also states that all medical information must be kept confidential.

You have the right to work free of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation during the application process, while working, or as a former employee. Another consideration is that those who are in a relationship with someone with a disability are afforded the same rights pertaining to discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

If you feel you have been discriminated against based on your disability, you can file a complaint. There are several ways to file a complaint with the EEOC but be aware that there are time restrictions that must be observed. If you need more advice or information, JAN has great resources that may help.

With my disability, the employment-seeking process has always been stressful. Not knowing whether to disclose my disability or how to approach the accommodation I need with an employer has been overwhelming. Learning my rights set in ADA Title 1 has been a game changer. I feel more confident about seeking employment and performing my job duties once hired. If you have questions, contact the EEOC or JAN for more information or visit them online. ■

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: PREPARING FOR A CAREER IN LOGISTICS

BY APRIL WHITE



The San Francisco Bay Area, with its prime geographic location and energetic economy, is a bustling hub for logistics—the coordination and tracking of goods and merchandise from origin to destination. Home to the Ports of Oakland, San Francisco, and Benicia, as well as smaller ports scattered throughout the Bay, the area is a key gateway for the movement of merchandise. This environment provides an array of positions and occupations for those seeking work in the supply chain sector. Based in the San Francisco East Bay, PCCS has taken advantage of its location to offer a course that equips its clients with a competitive edge in the field.

The Inventory Control and Logistics Certification Program provides training and preparation essential for employment in inventory control, shipping and receiving, and warehousing. This 32-hour in-person course features a thorough overview of warehouse basics with an emphasis on critical skills. PCCS Instructor Frank Silva described the course focus as “teaching best practices in logistics and warehouse settings...that are transferable from job to job. Each employer will want to orient their new employees to their own systems and culture, but there are skills that are universal.” Safety training is key among such skills, and it is central to the course. As most companies are bound by state and federal safety regulations, completing a course covering workplace safety could be just the ticket to catch an employer’s attention.

When training for jobs that involve the physical coordination and movement of goods, there is no substitute for hands-on experience. This course is designed to provide students with ample opportunity to learn and demonstrate new skills. Students are encouraged to collaborate, role-play, and develop effective communication within warehouse, storeroom, and/or mailroom settings. Key topics covered include freight handling, shipping and receiving, assessing inventory, record keeping, professional confidentiality, ergonomic lifting, and proper body mechanics.

The structured coursework prepares students to be

successful as both employment candidates and hired employees by providing optional supportive learning resources such as videos, self-tests, and reference materials throughout the course. The program is tailored to address the individual strengths and challenges of learners, both of which are regarded as opportunities for growth. Class size is small, just a handful of students, allowing participants to learn at their own pace with guidance from a competent and knowledgeable instructor.

This in-depth course is held in a sustainably-resourced simulated warehouse environment at the REAP Climate Center in Alameda. The Climate Center provides a unique off-grid, carbon-neutral learning atmosphere for the course, which includes training in best practices related to ecology-related topics such as recycling, hazardous materials disposal, and waste reduction to prepare learners for an employment landscape where industries and standards are increasingly adopting green practices for long-term sustainability.

Learners receive a certificate upon completion and the opportunity to collaborate with PCCS’s knowledgeable and resourceful job developers to refine their resumes, sharpen their interview skills, and tailor their job search strategies for the ideal position. According to course instructor Alessandro Maione, “There is high demand for workers in logistics inventory - it’s a growing field here [in the Bay Area].” This position is supported by current data from the State of California Employment Development Department, which shows no job shortages in this category. In fact, it ranks among the top five categories for the number of openings for workers without a college degree in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and it is predicted to maintain its rank through 2030. Bay Area workers in this field have impressive earning potential, grossing salaries that are 18% higher than the national average. With the combination of this comprehensive course and PCCS’s supportive employment services, job seekers gain a serious advantage in an industry that has a rich local history, current high demand, and a bright outlook throughout the Bay Area. ■

SERVING UP FOOD SAFETY

BY APRIL WHITE



Since June of 2011, when California Senate Bill 602 went into effect, the state has required that employees who prepare, serve, or store food in restaurants and dining facilities have valid food safety certification. This regulation intends to mitigate the risk of contamination and help keep diners safe from foodborne illnesses. Employers also benefit, as maintaining compliance improves quality, boosts consumer confidence, and reduces legal liabilities.

ServSafe, a certification program developed by the National Restaurant Association and approved by the state of California, helps workers and employers comply with these regulations. Those who complete the course and pass the ServSafe Food Handler Exam are awarded a certificate that allows them to work as food handlers in California. To meet demand, ServSafe trainings are readily available.

But not all trainings are alike. PCCS has put a unique spin on food safety with their Food Service Training Certificate Program. Most other programs are brief and often conducted entirely online, relying heavily on reading materials, videos, and lectures. Counter to this approach, PCCS offers a 32-hour in-person training program with a strong emphasis on hands-on learning experiences. Students are awarded certification after passing the ServSafe Food Handler Exam, but the course offers much more. In addition to covering the basics of food handling, the PCCS program delves into kitchen prep work, sanitation, food preparation and presentation, and essential skills like the safe use, care, and disinfection of cutting tools and surfaces.

According to a study from Purdue University, students who participated in hands-on activities—also known as active learning—received significantly higher test scores than those who didn't. Another study (conducted in 2013 by scholars from the Universities of Washington and Maine) found that learners who engaged in active learning

were 1.5 times more likely to succeed in coursework than their peers who did not. While the PCCS program includes conventional resources like a coursebook and video learning, it really shines by highlighting interactive instruction and encouraging participation, discussion, and teamwork. So far, the course has maintained a 100% success rate—all students who have completed the training have also passed the final exam.

Another unique benefit of the training is the guidance of instructor Alessandro Maione. With extensive experience in commercial kitchen operations and the hospitality industry, he is an invaluable resource. As an excellent teacher passionate about safety, he clearly explains concepts and engages with learners. In this in person setting, he's available to demonstrate techniques, answer questions, and act as a mentor during training. Students in this multifaceted course gain practical experience in serving food and working with the public in a commercial food service capacity. These hands-on opportunities help build 'muscle memory' that allows learners to become more efficient and consistent while reducing the cognitive load of their tasks. They also have the unique chance to practice their skills in an off-grid, carbon-neutral commercial kitchen at the REAP Climate Center.

Designed to be accessible to all learners and tailored to meet students' needs, this course prepares participants for more than just fast food jobs. The small class size, person-centered learning format, and instructor mentoring support students to learn at their own pace and prepare for employment in various restaurant and kitchen settings. By focusing on personalized learning and real-world readiness, the PCCS Food Service Training Certificate Program provides a solid foundation for a successful and fulfilling career in the culinary and hospitality industries. ■



Pacific Coast
Community Services

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3. Customizing resumes, cover letters & follow-ups
4. Marketing yourself in an interview
5. Networking, references & referrals
6. If, when & how to disclose a disability
7. High impact job search strategies
8. How to keep a job once you get one
9. Acquiring skills & experience when you lack them
10. Good mental health for job seekers
11. Tech, AI & electronic applicant tracking systems



Avoid the frustration & isolation of job hunting. Join the next **Job Club** via Zoom. PCCS clients, check your in-box for weekly invites & job leads.