

DI Partners Employees with Success

Ariela had just immigrated to the United States from Peru, and although she spoke English and Spanish and had a college degree, she was unfamiliar with the work environment in the United States and felt unsure about finding a job. Her bishop suggested she work with Deseret Industries (DI), a nonprofit, vocational rehabilitation facility sponsored by the Church that doubles as a thrift store.

Soon after beginning work at her local DI, Ariela enlisted in DI's business partnership program, where she was able to have an internship-type



experience at a local government justice service company that taught her basic business procedures. She soon felt comfortable with her career skills and was able to find permanent employment.

Ariela's is just one of thousands of success stories that have come out of the business partnership program, which exists at each of DI's 43 locations as well as at 12 employment centers—3 of which are in Mexico, the Philippines, and Haiti.

In this program, DI partners with local companies to allow associates to train in their field of

interest. It's a win-win-win situation: DI fulfills its mission to help people help themselves by paying the associate's wages, liability, and workers' compensation; the company receives an employee resource free of charge; and the associate receives pay and training. Many partnerships end with a job offer or recommendation.

The program began in 2008; today, nearly 1,500 people have been placed in business partnerships through DI. Roughly half of those have been hired into full-time, benefit-paying jobs. Eight out of every 10 placements are done with companies that have partnered with DI in the past.

"At first businesses want people to come because it means free help," said Danny Brock, who helped create the program. "But after a while, they . . .

decide what they really like is being able to help someone."

Before entering the business partnership program, DI associates are rigorously screened and evaluated, cleared for work, and instructed in character, work habits, and business relationships to ensure they are capable and informed.

"The beauty is that the associates get to do something they

actually want to do," Brother Brock said. "Dog grooming, contracting, bookkeeping, welding, medical assisting—you name the occupation, and we can make a partnership."

Besides the increase in skills, the certifications, and the financial benefits, he said, the program supplies the emotional benefits of fulfilling dreams and providing prayed-for opportunities for both those in the program and employers.

"Every day I get to see [people] find hope and happiness," Brother Brock said, "and I see the Lord's love for His children." ■

Deseret Industries is not just a thrift store; through its business partnership program, associates have the opportunity to get on-the-job training in their field of interest.