

DESERET INDUSTRIES

Founded in 1938, Deseret Industries is now in its 75th year of helping individuals become more self-reliant and grow into their best selves.

By Ryan Carr

Church Magazines

Although Deseret Industries opened its first thrift store 75 years ago, many Church members still think of Deseret Industries as simply a place to donate or purchase used clothing, furniture, electronics, and other items. While this is true, all of the work that goes into sorting, cleaning, pricing, and displaying these items is a means to an inspired end: helping Deseret Industries' employees—or associates, as they're called—become more self-reliant and learn skills that will benefit them in future employment.

Leland Hardy, director of Deseret Industries, describes the work this way: “Whereas most businesses use people to move or build things, Deseret Industries uses things to move and build people.”

Associates come to Deseret Industries with various barriers to employment: some are learning to speak English; some have disabilities; some need more education; some have had problems with addictions; some have not learned the work ethic it takes to succeed at a job; and some are just down on their luck. The list of challenges is long, but Deseret Industries' professional development staff welcomes them all.

DOING A CHRISTLIKE WORK



Working with Associates Individually

One key to Deseret Industries' success is that its professional development staff works with associates individually to help them become the person they desire to become. Deseret Industries does this by surrounding associates with a team that is dedicated to helping them set and reach their goals:

- A **development specialist**—an expert in vocational counseling (often a professionally licensed counselor)—helps the associate identify and work toward achieving his or her career goals.
- A **job coach** meets with the associate at least weekly to set and review goals tailored to the associate's needs and aspirations.
- Assigned by the bishop, a **mentor** from the associate's ward gives encouragement and support. The mentor attends a quarterly meeting with the associate and his or her development team to assess progress and set goals. The mentor also reports back to the bishop.
- When associates are ready to leave Deseret Industries, an **employment specialist** from LDS Employment Resource Services gives associates individualized job-placement assistance. If they need additional help, Deseret Industries may provide an advanced-placement course in which associates are paid to plan and carry out their own job-finding program. The specialist provides these associates with materials, knowledge, and individual coaching to help them find a job.

Many others join in this effort as well, including local businesses, community agencies, and education programs. The associate's family members, Church leaders, home teachers, and visiting teachers also provide help and encouragement.

When applicable to the associate's situation, Deseret Industries can provide these services:

- **Schooling assistance:** Deseret Industries helps locate resources that provide scholarships to qualifying associates to help them achieve short-term educational goals.
- **Business partnerships:** When an associate has identified a particular type of job and has worked with the job coach to prepare himself or herself to work in that job, Deseret Industries seeks out a business that employs people in that type of job and

arranges for the associate to work and train at that business for up to three months. Deseret Industries may even pay part or all of the associate's wages during that time. This gives the associate time to learn the job, develop valuable work experience, and become familiar with the industry.

Success Stories

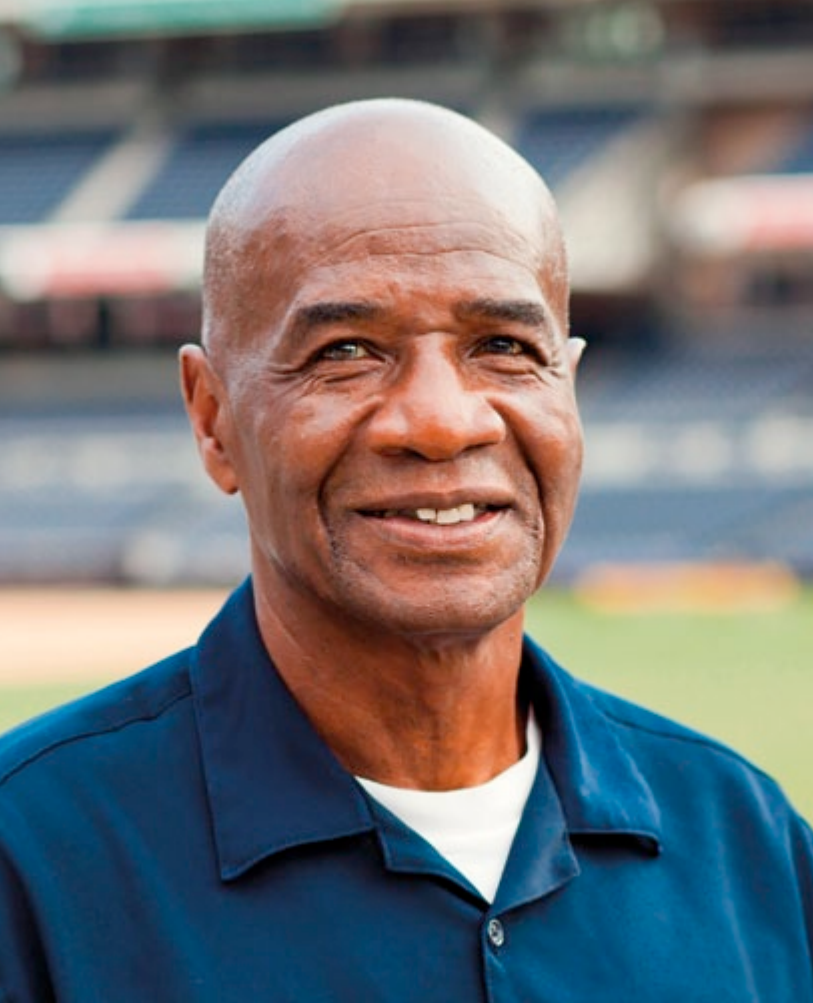
This approach has been remarkably successful in helping people reach their goals and transform their lives. Last year, after being referred by their bishops, more than 8,000 associates worked at Deseret Industries' 42 stores in the western United States and, in Salt Lake City, at a manufacturing facility and the Humanitarian Center. What follows are just three of the many success stories Deseret Industries sees each year.



Lifted to a Better Life

When Penita Fiorelli and her family emigrated from Tonga to Utah to be closer to relatives, she couldn't speak English. But she and her family moved to an area with many Tongan Latter-day Saints, and they met the branch president and some other Church members. Penita tried to find work but was unsuccessful, so the branch president referred her to the training program at Deseret Industries. As part of her training there, she attended English classes and received tutoring. As her English improved, she worked on becoming a certified nurse assistant (CNA). With the help of a flexible work schedule at Deseret Industries, she was able to attend school and pass the state certification test—in English.

During this time, she was attending church with the Tongan branch, and after three months of working at Deseret Industries, she was baptized, along with her husband. Their children were baptized a few months later. She says, "The example of our branch members and the staff and associates at Deseret Industries has brought us true happiness and has lifted us to a better life."



Hitting a Home Run

Al Mosley was enjoying his job managing a restaurant in Southern California until he had a stroke. He was discouraged that he couldn't return to the job he had worked so hard to obtain, but he felt hope when he learned he could return to work again—at Deseret Industries.

“I was excited at having an opportunity to have a second chance but wondering if I was capable,” he recalls. Despite his physical limitations, he worked with a good attitude, having always believed in doing his best. Deseret Industries gave him shift leadership responsibilities. “I discovered that I was able to work up to do things I never thought I would do again,” he says. “I was also able to learn new skills in organization and merchandising.”

Before long, he was offered a position with the San Diego Padres, a major league baseball team, running one of its food departments. He explains the progress he has made: “I may have been presented a curveball in life because of my stroke, but because of my experience at D.I., I have the opportunity to hit home runs.”



IF YOU DON'T HAVE A DESERET INDUSTRIES NEAR YOU

There are other ways to help people overcome barriers to employment. The following suggestions may be helpful to bishops, welfare specialists, ward councils, and stake and ward employment specialists:

- Visit deseretindustries.lds.org and ldsjobs.org for several resources.
- Meet with your ward or stake employment specialist and the ward member who needs help, and identify barriers limiting the member from finding employment.
- Help the member establish a career plan and set goals according to the SMART model: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-limited.
- Connect the member with a mentor. A mentor can be a home or visiting teacher or anyone in the ward who encourages the member. Ideally, mentors have experience in the member's desired field of work or education.
- Use existing community resources. Local job postings, scholarships, vocational rehabilitation, and educational coursework or technical training are often available.



A PLACE OF SUPPORT

“During the past 75 years, more than a hundred thousand people have entered into Deseret Industries' training program and discovered here a place of nurturing and support—a place where they can develop and discover the persons they were capable of becoming.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, at the dedication of the Sandy, Utah, Deseret Industries, Aug. 14, 2013.



Letting Go of the Past

Before working at Deseret Industries, Miriah Pace from Idaho had struggled with a drug addiction for many years, which landed her in prison for 18 months. After her release, she began attending college. Five years passed without a relapse. Then her brother, grandmother, and best friend all died within a short period of time. She fell back into her old drug habits but then sought help at an in-patient treatment center.

It was during this difficult time that her bishop referred her to Deseret Industries. "I was in dire need of structure and stability," she says. Finding work there helped, but she was still grieving and started using drugs again. Although this caused her attendance at Deseret Industries to suffer, she persisted in the program because she looked forward to the weekly devotionals, where she heard prayers and gospel messages. "I began to pray for hope," she recalls.

At work her skills improved to the point that a local employer partnered with Deseret Industries to offer Miriah a position as an editor and office assistant. She now helps manage the organization's website and edit its peer-reviewed publication.

Last year she achieved two important goals: she graduated with an associate degree and went to the temple to receive her own endowment. She says her experience at Deseret Industries helped change her life: "I have let go of the past and only look forward. I am excited about life. I now know that I am a child of God because He loved me when I couldn't love myself. I know Heavenly Father has a plan for me."

Deseret Industries helps people develop hope when they are discouraged, confidence when doubting, and self-reliance when struggling. Are these not the things the Savior would do if He were here? Would He not "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees"? (D&C 81:5). This Christlike work is the work of Deseret Industries. ■



THE MANY FACES OF DESERET INDUSTRIES

Deseret Industries benefits the community and the people it serves in many ways:

- Offers people opportunities to give and serve. More than 50,000 people volunteered their time at Deseret Industries in 2012.
- Promotes recycling and reuse of items, thus encouraging thrift. Over 7.5 million donations of used goods were made in 2012.
- Provides low-cost items to the community and, through bishops' orders, no-cost items to the needy.
- Strengthens community programs by providing no-cost goods to agencies that help needy individuals, such as orphanages, battered-women's shelters, and homeless shelters. Over 560 community agencies served more than 50,000 people in 2012.
- Participates in humanitarian outreach: donated 8.7 million pounds of clothing and assembled more than 330,000 humanitarian kits in 2012.
- Teaches English as a second language.
- Helps refugees gain education and work experience as they try to assimilate into a new culture.

