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Secretary Newson: New Small Business in La Crosse Example of How People with Disabilities Can Contribute, Help Employers Succeed

During Great Harvest Bread Company visit, Deputy Secretary Barry highlights Governor Walker's Better Bottom Line initiative encouraging employers to hire people with disabilities

LA CROSSE – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson today cited a new Great Harvest Bread Company franchise in La Crosse as an example of how people with disabilities can help employers succeed, what Governor Walker envisioned with his *Better Bottom Line* initiative.

"One of Jennifer Williamson's first hires was a person with disabilities, and with his help in setting up the bakery, she and her husband, Chris, today are open for business, employing 12 people in jobs that didn't exist a few months ago," Secretary Newson said. "People with disabilities really do have much to offer, and Great Harvest is a good example of what Governor Walker wants to achieve with his *Better Bottom Line* initiative. He wants to encourage employers in search of good workers to consider hiring people with disabilities because they can improve a company's bottom line to the benefit of both the employer and the worker."

Governor Walker proclaimed 2014 *The Year of the Better Bottom Line* and plans to spend the year highlighting successful operations thanks in part to the contributions of people with disabilities, while urging other employers to consider an often overlooked skilled and capable workforce.

On behalf of Secretary Newson, Deputy Secretary Jonathan Barry congratulated Jennifer and Chris Williamson on opening their new business and Robert Stach on achieving his employment goal with the help of the DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). During his visit, Deputy Secretary Barry said the employer and job seeker were able to connect because of DVR's new team of Business Services Consultants.

Initiated last year, the DVR Business Services Consultants team has dramatically expanded outreach efforts to employers, letting them know what DVR and the people it serves have to offer. To date, Business Services Consultants staff contacted over 4,700 businesses and arranged 314 internships, temporary employment that resulted in 374 direct hires.

DVR assists over 17,000 individuals with disabilities, and in fiscal year 2013, it helped 3,840 consumers achieve their employment goals. These newly employed individuals are projected to earn \$66.3 million annually, more than double the taxpayer investment in their services.

In December, Governor Walker signed legislation providing over \$2 million in additional state funding per year so that DVR can secure more federal aid to serve more people with disabilities. More recently, he signed legislation authorizing \$35 million more in funding for his *Wisconsin Fast Forward* initiative. DVR will share in the funding and use its portion to help expedite services for people with disabilities.

For more about the Governor's *Better Bottom Line Initiative*, visit: <http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/newsroom/press-release/year-better-bottom-line-governor-scott-walker-visits-mosinee-cold-storage>
For more about DVR services, visit: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/>.