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## **DWD Secretary Newson Congratulates Graduates of Job Training Program for People with Disabilities**

### ***Collaboration with Walgreens leads to employment for job seekers with disabilities***

Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson today congratulated the latest graduates of an on-the-job training program for people with disabilities, a state partnership with Walgreens that puts individuals on a path to employment and independence.

Since May 2012, the DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has partnered with Walgreens in the national drugstore chain's **Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative (REDI)**. The success of the early pilot in Milwaukee led the state and Walgreens to expand the program at Walgreens stores across the state. Today, REDI participants are receiving retail sales training in stores throughout Wisconsin. Today's graduation in Janesville, with graduates from stores in both Janesville and Beloit, is the latest example of the successful initiative.

"People with disabilities can play an important role in Wisconsin's economy, providing the skills and talents that businesses need to grow and succeed," stated Secretary Newson. "Governor Walker recognizes this and recently signed legislation as part of his Blueprint to Prosperity initiative, as well as, proclaiming 2014 the "Year of a Better Bottom Line"."

In 2010, Walgreens launched REDI as a pilot in Texas and soon expanded it to more than 150 stores throughout Texas, New York and Connecticut. To date, more than 200 individuals across the country have successfully completed four weeks of training as service clerks, and 66 percent have been recommended for hire.

The five REDI graduates honored in Janesville today bring the statewide total of successful REDI participants to 102. Of the REDI graduates thus far, 68 are employed by Walgreens. Of the remaining graduates, 10 are working for other employers.

Walgreens has more than 220 stores in Wisconsin, and the expansion of the REDI program to select locations throughout the state will continue to occur gradually. There are currently 22 REDI sites in Wisconsin, in stores in Beloit, Janesville, Racine, Milwaukee, Franklin, Wauwatosa, Oconomowoc, Waukesha, West Bend, Oshkosh, Kaukauna, Appleton, Green Bay, Manitowoc and Eau Claire.

DVR partner, Community Solutions, was recruited to facilitate the training with Walgreens for both the Janesville and Beloit stores. The REDI program is one way DVR investments are yielding successful outcomes for Wisconsinites.

DVR is the state's premier program to provide employment services and counseling to people with disabilities who face substantial barriers to employment. In 2013, DVR served more than 17,000 Wisconsin residents with disabilities and placed 3,840 people in jobs. These newly employed individuals are projected to earn \$66.3 million annually, which represents a more than double return on the public investment in their services.

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For more about the Walgreens REDI program: [http://www.walgreens.com/topic/sr/disability\\_inclusion\\_home.jsp](http://www.walgreens.com/topic/sr/disability_inclusion_home.jsp)

For more about DVR: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/>