

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | November 19, 2021

Two North Dakota businesses receive statewide awards for supporting the employment of people with disabilities

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has recognized two businesses for supporting an inclusive workforce by hiring, training and inspiring people with disabilities to excel in the workforce.

The agency and State Rehabilitation Council selected **Sanford Health** of **Bismarck** as the 2021 North Dakota State VR Employer of the Year award recipient. The **Roosevelt Park Zoo** of **Minot** was recognized with the You Make a Difference Award.

Sanford Health was selected from among eight nominees and was recognized for efforts to support and inspire individuals with disabilities to achieve employment goals and to reach their full potential in their community.

Bismarck VR office team members who nominated Sanford Health for this honor said the hospital's willingness to make workplace accommodations allowed for multiple individuals with disabilities to become and remain employed in non entry-level positions.

"At Sanford Health, we pride ourselves on maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and safe work environment for all our employees," said DJ Campbell, executive director of human resources for the Bismarck region of Sanford Health. "Our commitment to diversity and inclusion pushes our organization to continually build on the talents and experiences of our employees, as well as the patients and communities we serve."

Other nominees receiving honorable mention include Bowman Lodge, **Bowman**; JCPenney, **Fargo**; Hugo's Family Marketplace, **Grand Forks**; Triumph, Inc., **Jamestown**; Langdon Daycare, **Langdon**; Maysa Arena, **Minot** and the Daily Addiction Coffee House, **Williston**.

The statewide You Make a Difference Award honors one business annually for consistently recognizing individuals' unique abilities, providing work experience opportunities for students with disabilities, and actively supporting, developing and inspiring students to achieve goals in a competitive and integrated employment setting.

The Roosevelt Park Zoo in Minot was recognized for providing students with disabilities with temporary work experiences in a variety of areas including concessions, gift shop, janitorial, and dietary support for animals. The zoo also provides students with natural supports and positive encouragement and allows on-site job coaching to help students build confidence and skills for successful employment.

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“While we appreciate the recognition from the North Dakota Department of Human Services’ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the greater reward for the Roosevelt Park Zoo and staff has been getting to know these exceptional individuals and watching them develop into valued members of our team,” said Zoo Director Jeffery Bullock.

These awards were presented to Sanford Health and Roosevelt Park Zoo during an awards ceremony at VR’s annual training conference in late October in West Fargo.

“It’s a pleasure to honor these North Dakota businesses for their continued work with our program to help people of all abilities reach their full potential in the workforce,” said Damian Schlinger, VR division director. “North Dakota is the leader in the employment of people with disabilities because of the tremendous support from our business community.”

The department’s VR team helps people with disabilities find and retain meaningful work or advance their careers. The division also works with employers to help connect them with qualified applicants, retain trained workers whose abilities may have changed and find solutions to disability-related issues.

Rehabilitation counseling and consultation is available at no cost to qualifying individuals and businesses, nonprofits and government agencies.

To receive VR services, North Dakotans must have a disability that is an obstacle to employment, and they must want to work and be available to work.

Information about VR services is available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html or by contacting the division at 1000 E. Divide Ave., Bismarck, N.D., 58501, 701-328-8950, toll-free 800-755-2745, 711 (TTY) or dhsvr@nd.gov.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

LuWanna Lawrence | 701-328-1892
lklawrence@nd.gov

Heather Steffl | 701-328-4933
hsteffl@nd.gov