

Celebrating an inclusive community

Employing a Person with a Disability

Kevin Olinger celebrated his 29th year of employment at Nyberg's Ace in December 2012. To celebrate this milestone, Kevin and his coworkers had a celebration at his apartment, something he'd been looking forward to for months. Through his job at Nyberg's Ace, Kevin has been able to develop relationships, earn a living, discover his talents and grow as an individual, while achieving and celebrating an ordinary life.

Kevin Olinger originally worked at Sioux Vocational Services, now known as South Dakota Achieve. It was there that Ed Limpke, a Governing Board member at the time, noticed that Kevin could be challenged more. Believing in Kevin's potential, Limpke contacted Kevin Nyberg, owner of Nyberg's Ace, and asked if he had a job for Kevin Olinger.

Olinger became the first person with a disability to be employed at Nyberg's Ace. Since then, Nyberg's has continued to employ and support the involvement of people with disabilities at its stores.

"I have good friends; my coworkers care about me," says Olinger, with enthusiasm about his experience working at Nyberg's Ace. "I have fun with the people here. I like to give Kevin (Nyberg) a bad time, and tease him about how I'm gonna buy him out and be his boss some day."

Kevin Nyberg laughs with Olinger, and says, "We really have a good time together, and Kevin really likes to joke and laugh. He likes to watch Happy Days, and sometimes calls me Howard Cunningham, the father in Happy Days who also owned a hardware store."

Olinger works six days a week, four to six hours each day, at three of the four Nyberg's Ace stores in Sioux Falls. His main job is to keep the buildings clean and looking nice for customers. "I sweep, clean the bathrooms and empty the trash. Each day I clean two stores," says Kevin. His daily presence at two different Ace stores around town has made him a well-known face in the community.

"Kevin's really an amazing person and employee. He is smart, and knows what's going on, and has developed into a true business-savvy individual who understands profit and expenses, and how this affects our employees and business," says Kevin Nyberg, adding that Kevin's work ethic is also an example for other employees. "He works hard and is reliable, and likes to get to know his coworkers; he can remember every employees' name that has ever worked here."



Kevin Olinger and Kevin Nyberg

has learned from Kevin, developing patience, understanding and a greater perspective. When we see the challenges and barriers that Kevin's faced with in his life, people begin to think differently about their own life," says Kevin Nyberg.

"It's pretty amazing to think that Kevin gets up everyday with the same exact routine. But with his job and relationships at Ace, he gets to interact with others and we help to vary that routine and add to his day, as he does to ours," says Nyberg.

"I like my job and I like to help people."

— KEVIN OLINGER

Not only is Olinger an exceptional employee, he's also a good person and a true gentleman with a generous nature. "Kevin is a very honest person and takes pride in what he does and takes his job very seriously," says Marin Huber, sister of Kevin Nyberg, and the advertising and marketing director for the Sioux Falls Ace stores.

"Of course, not every day is a good day for Kevin; like everyone, he also has his occasional bad days and gets frustrated, but we're here to help him through those situations," says Nyberg, adding that some of those frustrations occur when people don't understand Kevin or don't have patience with him. In his own words, Olinger says, "Sometimes people can be rude when they don't understand, I wish they'd be more understanding; I don't want them to be mad or mean, I just want them to be nice to me."

"Employing Kevin and other people with disabilities has really made us more aware of these individuals, helping us to understand and respect them, as well as acknowledge their abilities," says Nyberg. "Kevin adds so much to our work environment—whether he's having a good or bad day."

It's Olinger's personality and his relationships with coworkers that really impact the business and employees at Nyberg's. "Our whole team

"With patience and understanding, people like Kevin can do amazing things," says Nyberg. "We as a community don't realize there are a lot of capable people with disabilities who need a chance. Kevin was lucky because someone saw his potential and knew he needed a chance in a mainstream work environment. He was given the opportunity to utilize his talents."

Achieve offers many opportunities to the people they serve, but it's their partnerships with members and businesses of the community that really add to the breadth and diversity of these services and opportunities.

"This is the reason that I became involved with Achieve—to encourage more community outreach and involvement," says Nyberg, who now serves on Achieve's Governing Board. "Nyberg's Ace and Kevin Olinger are an example of Achieve's employer initiative and what we would like to see more of in the community."

Olinger's life and his appreciation for his job, relationships and achievements truly are a reflection and reminder of the value of and celebration for an ordinary life. "People like Kevin need a chance," says Nyberg. "Just think of how many more businesses could take on these individuals and watch them grow."

