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Businesses that Reach! Hire! to be Honored by State

Tallahassee - Eight businesses from around the state that employ people with disabilities will be recognized on Thursday, October 1, in Tallahassee. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Blind Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Agency for Workforce Innovation will present awards to the businesses that are committed to hiring and retaining people with disabilities as part of their employee pool.

October is Disability Employment Awareness Month, and the state is highlighting contributions of people with disabilities to the workforce. The event will be in the Tallahassee City Commission Chambers, 300 S. Adams Street, from 9 to 10 a.m. The theme for the Florida celebration is Reach! Hire! The recognition ceremony is free and open to the public.

Tallahassee business owner Donna Smithey of In Tents Events will talk about the difference people with disabilities have made to her organization. Her employee, Michael Folsom, will share the importance of having an opportunity to show his talents on the job.

Tallahassee City Manager Anita Favors Thompson will welcome attendees. Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson will deliver remarks during the event. Representatives from the Able Trust and the Florida Business Leadership Network will debut a statewide media campaign called "Look at My Abilities" featuring people with disabilities and their successes on the job. The state kickoff of Disability Mentoring Day activities in Florida will be announced.

The state of Florida will be present the businesses with the Florida Exceptional Employer Award. The Florida Exceptional Employer Award is recognizing both the commitment of businesses in hiring and retaining people with disabilities and also creating unique employment opportunities.

Statewide and local employers will be recognized. Some of the winners are from Pensacola, Marianna, Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando, Key West, and West Palm Beach.

The agency annually serves about 35,000 Floridians with developmental disabilities of mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and Prader-Willi syndrome. For more information on the agency, call 1-866-APD-CARES or visit www.APDCares.org.

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