

Bettaway Partners with WeMake to Expand Innovative Jobs Program for Autistic Adults

Supply chain firm launches structured program to create long-term, meaningful jobs for adults on the autism spectrum at high-tech Piscataway logistics center.

SOUTH PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY, UNITED STATES, April 21, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bettaway Supply Chain Services announced today it is partnering with WeMake to launch a structured hiring, training and skills development program providing long-term jobs and career opportunities for adults on the autism spectrum.



Bettaway Beverage Distribution operates one of New Jersey's most modern and efficient beverage distribution warehouses

North Pennington, NJ-based WeMake is a non-profit skills development and workforce management organization dedicated to the autistic adult community. It has created a model program and support resources designed from the ground up to enable companies to establish and sustain meaningful workplace opportunities designed to help autistic adults succeed on their own in compatible work environments. At the same time, the program provides participating businesses with dependable, skilled, high-performing employees at a cost typically less than that for workers hired from traditional temporary agencies.

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Moe Siddiqu, Executive Director, WeMake

Bettaway is one of the largest providers of warehousing, distribution, supply chain and pallet management services for beverage producers in the Northeast. The WeMake program, to be launched next month, builds upon

Bettaway's experience providing career opportunities for autistic adults.

The company previously worked with the Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services, providing jobs during the pandemic for the program's participants, noted John Vaccaro, president of Bettaway. “The experience we had with the Rutgers program convinced us that we could do

more,” noted Vaccaro, whose son, Frankie, is on the autism spectrum.

When the pandemic hit, Rutgers had to shut down its on-campus operations – including on-site jobs specifically curated and developed to support the successful transition of the autistic adults into their first jobs in the workforce. Bettaway stepped in to fill that void, bringing students onto its Piscataway campus, a 300,000 square-foot, high-tech warehousing, and distribution complex. There, the Rutgers program members were trained and employed in specific warehouse operations work suited to their abilities.

As Covid has subsided, Rutgers re-instituted its program, with students returning to on-campus jobs. “WeMake is the next step in this journey to expand sustainable, fulfilling and rewarding job opportunities for autistic adults,” Vaccaro explained.

“Our mission is to create, inspire and implement an innovative approach to meaningful careers for people with autism, with everything from the environment, the processes, qualified support staff, job training and management coaching, all built around shared needs and goals,” noted Moe Siddiqu, WeMake’s founding executive director.

Founded in 2017, WeMake has successfully deployed its model in multiple industries. Its clients currently include pharmaceutical industry leaders, international e-commerce vendors, manufacturing, and small, emerging entrepreneurial businesses.

For example, for one manufacturing company, WeMake-supported employees, working with their hands in mini-teams, assemble and package small parts used in vinyl fencing and railing products sold at leading home improvement stores. The WeMake employees also perform eCommerce fulfillment. Collectively since inception, the WeMake program, across multiple clients, has processed more than two million units with a 99.7% accuracy rating.

“That proves our teams have the accuracy and attention to detail to ensure the client’s orders are fulfilled efficiently and accurately,” noted Siddiqu. “We provide businesses with the opportunity to support with action the inclusion of workers from the autistic adult community.”

With about 1 in 68 children in the U.S. having been identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the lack of programs and sustainable work situations for adults with autism will only become more acute, explained Tony Lesenskyj, WeMake’s founder and chief executive. “When your child has autism, you look at the world in a whole different way,” he noted.

Unlike a traditional work environment that asks individuals with autism to adjust to them, WeMake has built the world’s first workspace centered around employees with autism, with the ability to focus on each staff member’s unique abilities and needs. “In short, we created WeMake to not only answer the question of ‘what’s next’ – but to introduce a model that takes inclusive work environments to the next level,” Lesenskyj said.

Siddiqu added that the 3PL space is ideal for WeMake because of the industry’s persistent labor

shortage, and the type of work to be done. "This is something we can put into a teaching curriculum," he noted. "These are long term jobs that are not going away, provide stability and consistency, and even offer opportunity for development and advancement, all of which help instill pride, confidence and self-esteem in these autistic adults."

Bettaway's Vaccaro said the company is currently developing the curriculum and job specifications to bring WeMake candidates on board. "In consultation with WeMake, we've identified the type of work that these individuals are best at," he noted. Those include warehouse logistics jobs like freight handling, unloading merchandise and goods from trailers and shipping containers, inventory put away and control, pick-and-pack preparation of eCommerce orders for fulfillment, light assembly and kitting of products, and shipping.

By the end of this year, Bettaway expects to bring in 15 candidates under the WeMake program, supported by two board certified Behavioral Analysts, who serve as coaches with specific behavioral skills training to help participants successfully engage with the program. They'll also have help from other WeMake resources including counselors, skilled training professionals and staff with experience helping autistic adults learn and succeed.

Ultimately, Vaccaro expects the program to grow a valuable workforce for Bettaway with unique qualities and skills. "We have seen autistic adults thrive in this environment," he notes. "As they grow and mature, take ownership of the work, and master their skill set, they become mentors and peer leaders for others coming in," he explained. "That's where I really get inspired, seeing these individuals with so much potential earning their success and, really, fulfilling a dream for themselves and their parents."

And for employers, gaining not only good employees, but the respect and recognition of all families touched by autism and the larger community. "We're helping an underserved class of deserving people, who can be assets to the business, achieve their dreams of independence and confidence in their skills, worth and abilities - regardless of where they fall on the spectrum," Vaccaro concluded.

About Bettaway Supply Chain Services: Bettaway is an integrated material handling, transportation, pallet management and supply chain services company

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