



## **MaxAbility Employment Taskforce: Success Story** *Putting Diversity First at Canteen Vending - Rochester, MN*



Meet Alex (*pictured left*), Casey (*pictured right*) and Joseph, employed at Canteen Vending in Rochester, MN. Canteen Vending is the largest automated merchandising company in the United States. Canteen is a division of Compass Group North America, which has been named as one of America's Best Employers by Forbes Magazine. Their Rochester location is a hub for all of their services in Olmsted County and some parts of Iowa. They provide all the vending options in the Mayo Clinic network, which equals over 400 machines alone!

Alex and Casey pack totes to refill the vending machines. Both individuals were a part of Project SEARCH in Rochester, a high school transition program for students with disabilities. The students had the opportunity to work at Mayo Clinic for their final year of school to gain necessary work skills. Laurie Ackerman, Director of Business Development at Opportunity Services, attended a Ribbon Cutting Event at Canteen Vending when they opened their location in Rochester in the spring. She knew right away that it would be an amazing employment opportunity. The Project SEARCH students participated in a tour, and Alex knew that he wanted to work at Canteen. After a successful interview, he started on-the-job in June, the day after he graduated. Alex really enjoys working at Canteen and is willing to go above and beyond the job. He's very tech-savvy and teaches his co-workers the various technologies utilized while packing the totes.

Casey was hired in September and is also really enjoying the job. He likes his co-workers and being able to cross train in both food and beverage packing. "Everyone is really nice here, and they keep the job fun," said Casey. "It took me a little bit to get used to the job and how to do things, but now I love working at Canteen." Because of the success of both Alex and Casey, Stuart Riemann asked Opportunity Services if there was anyone else who wanted to work at Canteen. Joseph was another Project SEARCH student who was on the hunt for the perfect job. After acing his interview, Joseph was hired in October. Betty Lamecker, Opportunity Services Job Coach to Alex, Casey, and Joseph, is quick to add her praise of Canteen. "They are a wonderful employer and make the warehouse environment welcoming and fun. I truly enjoy stopping by to check in on Casey, Alex and Joseph. I always feel very welcome."

Ask anyone on the Canteen team in Rochester; "These guys make a great addition to the warehouse floor!" "Alex, Casey and Joseph are important members of our team. They're amazing," said Cecil Bellephant, Warehouse Manager at Canteen. "I'm proud to work for a company that encourages diversity and inclusion and gives people with disabilities a chance to shine in the workplace." Canteen Vending is a true advocate for diversity and inclusion. They hosted their first annual National Inclusion Day on Wednesday, June 14<sup>th</sup> of this year and have a Diversity and Inclusion Team to ensure they are actively moving forward with their efforts. Stu Riemann, District General Manager of Canteen Rochester, commented, "I appreciate the Inclusion and Diversity training offered by Canteen. It opened my eyes to the importance of inclusion and diversity and the role it plays in the workforce. The training I received influences almost every decision I make as the District General Manager."

We look forward to seeing the continued success of Alex, Casey, and Joseph at Canteen Vending. The sky's the limit for their achievements on the job!

*Submitted by Laurie Ackerman,  
MaxAbility Employment Taskforce Member*