October 21, 2010

**Employment Program Benefits Disabled Adults and Employers**

CINCINNATI, OH – October is National Disability Employment month, and at a time when many people in southwest Ohio are having trouble finding suitable work or any employment at all, David Ash is happy to be working at a job he loves. Since 2007, Ash has been employed at the Kroger’s in Forest Park; bagging groceries, collecting shopping carts and helping out wherever he can. To create a perfect-fit for Ash, who has developmental disabilities (DD), Kroger worked with REM Ohio, a service provider to adults with DD that facilitates finding job opportunities and supporting individuals upon community employment.

“I like what I do because I get to help people out,” said Ash. “I’ve met a lot of nice people here and I know all of their names.”

The vast majority of people with disabilities do not work. According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics for May, the percentage of people with disabilities in the labor force was 22.3. By comparison, the percentage of people with no disability in the labor force was 70.1.

“David is hard-working, and has a good-heart,” according to Jeffrey Jones, Ash’s REM Ohio job coach. “Sometimes he needs help with the smaller carts, but we all need help some time. With proper supervision, David is able to make his own money and be a part of our community.”

Undoubtedly, many employers may worry that employing a worker with a disability may be fraught with pitfalls. They may worry about making expensive or time consuming accommodations. Or may be concerned about the disabled individual’s interactions with coworkers (and vice versa) or how reliable he or she may be as an employee. These may be legitimate initial concerns, however, employing a person with disabilities can be a win-win situation for everyone involved.

Additionally, wage and tax incentives are available to employers to encourage employment of workers with disabilities from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). After an employee has worked 400 hours, the company is eligible to receive a tax credit of 40 percent of the disabled employees first $6,000 in wages. If the worker leaves employment, but has worked at least 120 hours, the employer remains eligible for a prorated tax credit of 25 percent.

“David has worked hard on developing all the skills that are required to do his job well,” added Justin McNeeley, program director, REM Ohio. “This job has allowed David to be more self-sufficient and confident. He appreciates being able to use the money he earns to go bowling or out for a meal. In that way he’s just like anyone else.”

If you are an employer in northeast Ohio and would like to discuss the possibility of providing employment to an individual with disabilities, please call REM Ohio’s regional office located at 36 E. Hollister Street in Cincinnati at 513.381.3700.

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**About REM Ohio Inc.**

REM Ohio Inc., a partner of The MENTOR Network, serves adults with varied and often complex developmental disabilities. Headquartered in Akron, Ohio and with regional offices in Akron, Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati, the company’s programs and supports are built around the unique needs of each individual they serve and designed to promote independence, skill development, personal choice and growth in the communities where they live, work and play.