

THE EXTRA

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Able South Carolina changing culture of disability employment, one individual at a time



COURTESY OF ABLE SOUTH CAROLINA

Derrick Means, who has cerebral palsy, is a full-time library assistant at Spartanburg High School.

Able South Carolina

Seven out of 10 South Carolinians with disabilities are unemployed, making our state's unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities one of the highest in the country.

Enter Able South Carolina, an organization built on empowering those with disabilities to live fully engaged, self-directed lives.

Run by individuals with disabilities, Able South Carolina is challenging those in our state to focus on talent rather than perceived deficit with its Hire Me SC campaign.

"There is a remarkable workforce right here, ready to be hired," says Kimberly Tissot, executive director at Able South Carolina.

"We educate on discrimination, connect all parties with supports they need, and promote a greater understanding that employing individuals with disabilities will help communities thrive."

Hire Me SC was created thanks to a five-year federal grant secured by Able South Carolina and the South Carolina Disability Employment Coalition.

Initiatives include hosting an employer summit to educate

businesses on the benefits of hiring inclusively, providing statewide workshops to dispel myths about employment and disability benefits, and working to decrease employment barriers.

A social media portion allows young individuals with disabilities to voice career ambitions, discuss barriers faced, and share successes using the hashtag #HireMeSC.

"You may be told by the employer, 'Sorry, but we have gone with another applicant.' It is important that you do not put your head down," says Derrick Means, full-time library assistant at Spartanburg High with

cerebral palsy. "It is important that you get up, dust yourself off, and try again."

"Stories from individuals like Derrick encourage others to pursue their career ambitions and understand that employment with equal salary and wage is attainable," says Tissot.

In year two of the grant, they have more to conquer.

"We are excited to see the footprint of this campaign extend, and the impact it will have along the way on the lives of individuals with disabilities. We invite all to join us in this mission by going to our Hire Me SC Facebook page."

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