National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2017

Employee Spotlight

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What do you like best about your job?
What I most love about my job is that I have an opportunity to help employees focus on and utilize their abilities. Here at Johns Hopkins we are a model for disability inclusion in the workplace. We work very hard to make sure that our employees are accommodated to realize their full potential. I am proud of the work that we do and I am proud to help managers, Human Resources staff and other colleagues appreciate what people can do. As someone that is living with a disability, any opportunity to relay the message to our community that employees who live with a disability contribute to the Hopkins mission is extremely rewarding. I also like the people that I work with from across our member organizations and various departments. I learn something new every day.

How long have you been at Johns Hopkins and can you tell us a little about your job?
I have been at Johns Hopkins since November 2015 as the ADA/accessibility compliance consultant. Our office covers applicants, new hires and existing employees who request an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The bulk of my work is assisting Human Resources to help these employees perform at the top of their potential. Many who seek our services have chronic conditions that have gotten worse over time and need accommodations. Our office explores how to help these individuals succeed at their jobs. If employees are not able to perform their current job due to their medical condition, we assist them in finding a different position. In addition, we train Human Resources professionals and managers about the interactive process to help employees perform the essential functions of their job.

What kind of accommodations requests do you receive and how do you usually handle them?
There are several types of accommodations including scheduling, physical space modifications, programmatic accommodations and leave allowances. Scheduling accommodations allow individuals to arrive later or leave earlier to accommodate medical appointments and other logistics. There are also modifications to the work environment, such as a ramp to get into the building, an accessible restroom or a raised desk. Programmatic accommodations include providing written as well as verbal instructions, or a checklist of required tasks. Leave accommodations allow employees to take a leave of absence when they are temporarily unable to perform their essential duties because of their medical condition.

What message would you like managers to take away with respect to individuals who live with disabilities in the workforce?
First, focus on what the employee can do relative to the job. People may have difficulty hearing or they may not be able to walk, but they can perform their required tasks well. Second, living with a disability has challenges and managers need to be supportive. Third, individuals with disabilities are concerned about how they are perceived by their peers and supervisors. Managers need to keep employees’ information confidential and respect people’s privacy. Lastly, managers need to know that conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and learning disabilities may not be obvious yet they can be as challenging or even more challenging than visible disabilities.

What kind of accommodations requests do you receive and how do you usually handle them?

What message would you like managers to take away with respect to individuals who live with disabilities in the workforce?

What are some fun facts about you that you want our readers to know?
I am a very active individual. I play wheelchair rugby and I travel a lot. I have been to five different continents, and have backpacked through Europe with my wife.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?
I would like to advise any employees or managers that have questions or requests to reach out to their Human Resources representatives, as they are very knowledgeable, experienced and eager to help. People should not feel that they will be judged or jeopardized in any way. We give every employee that approaches our office full confidentiality and respect. Remember, we want to support you so that you can do your best—all we need from you is to learn how we can help.