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Jim Doyle, Governor
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Secretary Gassman Honors Employers for Hiring People with Disabilities

State Labor Secretary presents three firms with Exemplary Employer Awards

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today praised Badger Office City of Manitowoc, Chartroom Charlie's of Racine and GDSI of Amery for their leadership in hiring people with disabilities and showing other employers the benefits of a talented, diverse workforce.

"We all win with a diverse workforce," Secretary Gassman said. "People with disabilities achieve their economic independence through employment. Employers benefit from the many talents these workers have to offer. The community at large also benefits when all individuals have opportunities to contribute and the economy grows."

On behalf of Governor Doyle, Secretary Gassman presented Exemplary Employer Awards to the three employers during a recent ceremony at the Governor's Executive Residence. Each was recognized for their progressive hiring and retention policies, for providing a living wage and benefits, and for their willingness to make accommodations enabling workers to succeed.

Badger Office City, an office supply company, was recognized not only for its hiring practices, but the efforts of its owner, Terry Cloutier, in working with other employers, encouraging them to provide employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

Chartroom Charlie's and Donna Daams, owner of the Racine restaurant, were honored for creating a work environment that helps people with disabilities succeed. She hired a job coach to work with a new employee until the individual had the skills and confidence to work independently.

GDSI, a manufacturer of electrical switches, received its award for employing several people with disabilities and providing them the support they needed to overcome day-to-day challenges. GDSI employees Cheri Richards and Angie Larson accepted the award for GDSI at the ceremony.

DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides services to people with disabilities to help them achieve their employment goals. In 2008, DVR helped 3,641 people with disabilities achieve their employment goals. DVR estimates that these workers will earn approximately \$65.8 million annually, which represents a 220 percent return on the investment in the DVR services they received.

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