

| OPINIONS |

nity—and it's no different for people with developmental disabilities.

Today, people with disabilities work in fields as varied as data entry, retail, child care, food service, manufacturing and gardening. In contributing to our work force, these individuals are earning a paycheck, but more important, they are moving from reliance on others to greater financial independence. In fact, individuals working through Noble earned over \$1 million in the past fiscal year.

The businesses that hire them, in turn, gain qualified, dedicated employees that not only do their work but free up their co-workers to focus on their core responsibilities. And because the turnover rate is low—individuals with disabilities remain in their jobs an average of more than 3-1/2 years—they help reduce costs associated with constant hiring for entry-level positions. The tax credit businesses earn is a bonus. And our community likewise benefits by increasing its taxpayer base, while facilitating a transition away from dependence on government funding.

Unfortunately, these individuals are chronically unemployed or underemployed, largely because businesses are hesitant to tap into this labor pool. According to a National Organization on Disability survey, only 35 percent of people with disabilities reported being employed full- or part-time. The same study found that 26 percent live in poverty, with annual household incomes below \$15,000.

That's why Noble is launching our 31 Jobs in 31 Days campaign. We are using the month of October—National Disability Employment Awareness Month—to spotlight the contributions made in the work force by people with disabilities and increase their employment opportunities.

Businesses have several options through Noble: They can outsource the work to be done by consumers at Noble Industries; they can contract the work out to be done on-site by our work crews, under the supervision of a Noble employee; or they can hire an individual to work at their location with training provided by our staff. Companies like Eli Lilly, Roche Diagnostics, Dow AgroSciences, Gregory & Appel Insurance and Cannon IV have used these services for years, reaping great results.

Hiring people with disabilities is not an act of charity. It is a sound business decision, and one we hope more businesses will make this fall.

*Michael R. Howland
President and CEO
Noble of Indiana*

Hiring the disabled pays dividends

A job is so much more than a means of making a living. A job defines us and shapes how we contribute to our commu-