



Helping the Disabled Return to Work

The economic malaise stifling employment growth in the U.S. can be devastating to many Americans out of work. And those with disabilities are particularly vulnerable during the financial downturn.

While it has always been a challenge for the disabled to find a job, approximately 16 percent of disabled workers are unemployed.¹ At the same time, these job seekers are in one of the most competitive employment marketplaces in recent history.

"While a job may not solve all the problems a disabled person must contend with, research affirms that employment can play an important role in helping those with disabilities achieve independence and economic self-sufficiency," said John Roberts, president and CEO of [Assurant Employee Benefits](#). "That's why Assurant Employee Benefits developed WillReturn[®], an integrated disability management program to help disabled employees become more productive in their daily lives."

Assurant Employee Benefits specializes in providing quality employee benefits and services. In addition to helping disabled employees return to work, Assurant Employee Benefits also encourages companies to retain, retrain and rehire employees who suffer disabilities whenever possible.

"With one in five Americans suffering some kind of disability and one in 10 having a severe disability, according to the U.S. Census, it is more critical than ever that companies embrace return-to-work efforts for their employees," Roberts added. "A disability should not automatically prevent people from being productive in their lives and on the job."

To raise awareness about this important issue and to recognize October being National Disability Employment Awareness month, Assurant Employee Benefits recently awarded its [Shining Star of Perseverance](#) to a policyholder who overcame incredible physical challenges to help others.

This year's recipient, Jennifer Mundl, became paralyzed from the neck down when she was just 17 years old after a gymnastics accident severely damaged her spinal cord. Mundl persevered and went on to earn a master's degree before working to develop the assistive technology practice at a rehabilitation and resource center, [Courage Center](#). Founded in 1928, the Minnesota-based nonprofit works to empower those with disabilities to realize their full potential.

The Shining Star of Perseverance is a national award presented annually by Assurant Employee Benefits' WillReturn Council[®] to an individual(s) who has made a significant recent contribution toward demonstrating perseverance through disabling illness or injury. Previous award winners include Aron Ralston, the American mountain climber portrayed in the film 127 Hours, and former U.S. Senator Robert Dole.

For more information about National Disability Employment Awareness click [here](#).

Read [Assurant Employee Benefit's news release](#) on this year's Shining Star of Perseverance award winner.

1. U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, August 2011, <http://www.dol.gov/odep/>.