

# Adena partners with Advancing Abilities

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Adena Health welcomed a new facet to their volunteer ranks in March in partnership with the Advancing Abilities program, which provides employment support to people with developmental disabilities. The program provides them the opportunity to try out an employer and a job role to determine if it's something they'd like to later pursue for employment.

Three participants from the program work in Adena Regional Medical Center's cafeteria two days a week, along with an Advancing Abilities support person. Their responsibilities include packaging food, putting it on trays to take to patient rooms, cleaning tables, filling salt shakers, moving products in production area, and more.



Lori Simms, manager of volunteer services, says, "I fell in love with the program. It's an awesome opportunity to be able to help people. And we benefit from them being here — they're really a big help. They do a lot."

The Advancing Abilities program has a number of positive benefits. Participants engage with the community, breaking down social barriers between differently abled adults and members of the community. They learn soft skills such as how to manage relationships at work and workplace etiquette.

Brandi Dalton, Advancing Abilities director of day and employment services, says, "This whole process with Adena has been such a wonderful experience. Everyone was so helpful during the onboarding process and orientation. The individuals that are participating in the program have loved every day they have spent in that experience.

They take so much pride in the fact that they are at the hospital, and all the employees that have been mentoring the participants have been so caring and patient. We really couldn't ask for better mentors. The benefits this partnership gives is going to help so many people reach the goals in their lives and enhance their future in such a positive way."

Michele Valentine, director of volunteer services, says one of the benefits of the program is changing perceptions of limitations. She says, "We put so many labels on people that if you're not careful, those labels can create limits."

The Advancing Abilities volunteers went through the same process as all volunteers, including screening, orientation, and training. If they decide they like the work they've done at Adena, they have the opportunity to apply for employment for open positions at the end of their volunteer period.