

Supported Self-Employment Program

Opportunity Partners is excited to announce a new and innovative program, Supported Self-Employment! It's just one more employment choice for individuals with disabilities.

When most people think about starting their own business, they must take into consideration health care costs, the mortgage payment, and rising food and fuel prices. Allen J. Hanson, like many participants at Opportunity Partners, does not face these barriers to entrepreneurship. An avid photographer who loves taking pictures of nature and architecture, Allen is learning through the Supported Self-Employment Program how best to generate income from his photos. His benefits will make it possible to develop a business granting him greater discretionary income and putting him on the path toward becoming more self-sufficient.

Opportunity Partners developed the Supported Self-Employment Program with the help of a \$10,000 grant from The CCP Foundation.

Through the program, Opportunity Partners provides 1:1 assistance to Vocational Rehabilitation participants to assist with starting a small business. This program is customized to each person's needs and designed to assist with the whole process of starting a business. Assistance is provided with:

- Assessment – conducting a personal inventory and pre-planning.
- Business feasibility – checking local/current market for business ideas.
- Business planning – assisting with writing a business plan, including marketing and financials.
- Technical assistance/job coaching – providing supports after the business start-up.
- Mentoring – linking participants with experts in self-employment, accounting, legal assistance, and more.

Opportunity Partners also offers a Supported Self-Employment Discovery training for participants in its Day Training & Habilitation (DTH) program. In this training, participants will:

- Discover interests and passions for self employment.
- Recognize team members who can help.
- Learn business planning basics.
- Test business ideas.
- Tour small businesses.

Once participants graduate from the training, they will be eligible to work with Philip Koffel, Supported Self-Employment Coordinator.



Allen J. Hanson shows off one of his digital photos on display at a local art show. Allen is enrolled in Opportunity Partners' Supported Self-Employment Program.

Who is eligible for the Supported Self-Employment Program?

Participants need a referral from a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor or county social worker and must:

- Have a disability.
- Have a business idea.
- Willing to meet on a regular basis and actively work with the coordinator to start their business.
- Have a supportive team, willing to assist with business idea and plan.
- Access to \$150 to open a business checking account and be prepared to contribute financially to the business.

The Supported Self-Employment Program is led by **Philip Koffel**, who started working at Opportunity Partners in December 2006 as a SET Instructor and is now the Supported Self-Employment Coordinator. As a previous small business owner, Philip understands what it takes to own a successful business. He has a thorough understanding of budgeting, advertising, networking and customer service. In addition, he has studied abroad in Bangladesh researching microcredit as a small enterprise start-up tool. Philip has a real passion to see individuals with disabilities be successful in the workplace and is excited to increase the employment options available to Opportunity Partners' participants.

For more information about Supported Self-Employment Program, please contact jcloutier@opportunities.org or pkoffel@opportunities.org.