



United Way
California Capital Region

PRIDE INDUSTRIES

A source of dignity for people with disabilities

The ability to work is something that most of us take for granted. In fact, it's an opportunity not given to everyone – a point made painfully clear to millions of people unemployed by the recent recession. But there's a segment of our population that struggles to find work regardless of what the economy is doing: people with disabilities. In fact, while California suffers under 12% unemployment, the unemployment rate among people with disabilities runs nearly 65%. Worse, people with disabilities are up to five times more likely to live in poverty.

PRIDE Industries was founded in 1966 with a mission to change that. What PRIDE recognizes is that work is more than just an income. It's a source of dignity. Further, the ability to do something meaningful with one's life is an opportunity that should be given to all people. Today, PRIDE Industries is a nationally recognized leader in giving that opportunity to people with disabilities. What began in a church basement in Auburn, Calif., is now the source of good-paying work for 2,700 people with disabilities nationwide. It's a success story that PRIDE attributes in part to the support it received from United Way during its early years. Today the not-for-profit business is largely self-sustaining with continued support from United Way, employee donations, private donors, and its own PRIDE Industries Foundation.

PRIDE's unique strength is its ability to create job opportunities for people that many employers are unable or unwilling to see as qualified employees. "Many employers can't see beyond the disability," says Jennifer Alpert Palchak, Executive Director of PRIDE Industries Foundation. But rather than viewing a disability as a roadblock, PRIDE sees an opportunity to match people with jobs they can do well and be successful at. "What's at stake is more than just an income," she says, noting that a paycheck is a "connection to a sense of self-worth."

For some PRIDE employees, work is the beginning of a journey to greater independence. In addition to providing job experience, PRIDE also teaches many of its employees independent living skills so they can eventually live on their own, something many people with disabilities (and their families) could not imagine without PRIDE's help. Perhaps, more than anything else, that concept is what keeps PRIDE going. "If you teach someone to do something that they previously thought was impossible," says Matt Strugar-Fritsch, Marketing Specialist at PRIDE Industries, "it changes their lives in a very powerful way."

If you'd like to help someone with disabilities find the dignity that comes from working, please contact PRIDE Industries Foundation: www.pridefoundation.us or 1-866-885-3940 or contribute an online [gift](#).

May is National Foster Youth Month and you can support a PRIDE sponsored Foster Youth Employment Program by doing the following: