

Maxwell & Megan's Story: Mentorship Makes a Big Difference



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"I like knowing I am responsible for things and that people are relying on me to get the job done." - Megan

Photo: Erma, Megan and Maxwell stand in the stock room at London Drugs

Maxwell and Megan both started at London Drugs in 2017 as Customer Service Associates. Through the support of a colleague who has mentored them, they not only feel accomplished in their roles, but a part of the London Drugs family. As a sign of this inclusive culture, their nametags read "Family Member since 2017".

Megan was working at a grocery store but was looking for more hours – so she approached Jobs West, a disability employment service organization – who set her up with a job coach. She interviewed with the Assistant Manager and Human Resources Manager and got the job. This seemed to be a great fit as there's always something to do and Megan likes a job where she can stay active. When she started, she was reserved and sometimes shy to ask questions. London Drugs assigned Megan to a mentor – Erma – who coached her in her role. "Erma helped me step out of my comfort zone and now I interact more with customers and I'm more comfortable asking questions when I need clarification" says Megan.

Maxwell was also working with a job coach who connected him to London Drugs. He came in for an initial interview and secured the job. When asked about the process Maxwell said "It was the best interview of my life. We really clicked and he didn't make me nervous. He started asking me about myself and we just talked. It turns out we have some things in common."



Maxwell started working in the stockroom and stocking the shelves with product. He said that what he found most challenging was the pace of the work, and having to be on his feet for hours on end, which was physically exhausting at first. However, over time, he built his strength and stamina and was more comfortable with the intensity and pace. The second challenge he cited is not always knowing what to do in between tasks – for example after having unloaded one skid, while waiting for the other skid. The key to navigating these challenges, and to his success, was also having Erma as his mentor.

“Erma helped me a lot. She allowed me to take small 5 minute breaks when I needed them, so I could build up my strength and get my job done. She also provided a lot of structure – helping me lay out my day, and understand what I can do when I am in between tasks.”

Having worked at London Drugs for 41 years as a Shipper/Receiver, Erma handles all the inventory - from when it arrives to when it is shelved. She is responsible for merchandising, training, managing team members, and operational planning. “I love working with new employees. I put my 100% in every day, and this reflects in the people I work with” she added. When asked for some tips on how she manages new staff members with various disabilities she offers:

1. **Give your team a sense of what the day looks like.** Laying out the day ahead helps reduce anxiety and creates clarity so everyone is on the same page.
2. **Appreciate your team.** People want to know they are a part of something successful – and want to feel that their contribution is making a difference. I show them how their accomplishments are adding to the bigger picture.
3. **Be flexible.** If you notice one of your team members is tired, or needs a quick mental break – don’t wait until their scheduled half an hour lunch. Offer them 5 minutes to recoup and they will be better positioned for the rest of the day.
4. **Encourage questions.** It can be intimidating to ask questions when you’re new and in some cases, when your previous experience asking questions hasn’t been positive.
5. **Build their area of expertise.** Allow them to master a task, and then add one more thing onto their plate. Everyone wants to develop their skills – but let people do it at their own pace.
6. **Team people up.** For some people, having a disability can be isolating as it can limit the availability of social interactions. Help people create a team at work where they get to know each other, rely on one another and support their peers.

Both Maxwell and Megan answered a little differently when they were asked why they love it at London Drugs – but it was clear that all three feel a sense of belonging within the organization. Megan said “I like knowing I am responsible for things and that people are relying on me to get the job done.” Maxwell enjoys the social interaction work provides “I never thought I would say this but interacting with the customers is pretty fun. And everyone here is so positive and open to questions. It’s pretty amazing because it’s a big family. You feel welcome as soon as you get here.” Erma added “I get to be part of this amazing team of people and see people learn and grow.”