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Disability Issues

## Group links shoppers to disability-friendly businesses

Sunday, May 15, 2011

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**Karen Meyer**More: [Bio](#), [News Team](#)

May 15, 2011 (EVANSTON, Ill.) (WLS) — Customers with and without disabilities want to be treated with respect when they deal with a business, and that's why a non-profit organization is making sure that happens.

JJ's List was started by a mother who has a child with autism. She saw a need to create a network of disability-friendly businesses for the fastest growing population.

Located in a storefront on a busy street in Evanston, JJ's List has a team of volunteers. Many of them have disabilities.

"The heart of our organization is a website, a consumer review website, where anybody can go to post reviews about the disability awareness or the disability services of local businesses, services any kind of business that you might use," said J.J. Hanley, founder and executive director of J.J.'s List.

In addition to their consumer review website, the group also provides disability awareness training to businesses.

"We can customize them for businesses to help them see what the benefits to disability aware services are, learn how to interact naturally and comfortably with an individual who has a disability," said Hanley. "We will also talk with them about making their website of what's called 508 compatible, which is so that individuals who use assistive technology can access and use a business's website."

J.J.'s List has been around for two years. Most of their reviews and training are in the northern suburbs area.

Whole Foods Market in downtown Evanston is one of the business they work with. Carleean Sommers is the marketing and community outreach specialist.

"They noticed that Whole Foods Market kept coming up on the list from both customers and from people that work here, and so they contacted us and said, 'Hey, you guys keep coming on the list. So, Whole Foods Market must be an advocate in the community. We'd love to talk to you,'" Sommers said.

A major plus for Whole Foods, one of J.J.'s List volunteers, Ira, also is an employee.

"I work in the prepared foods department. I work in the chef's case, you know, in customer service. I like my job a lot because I get to interact with other people, you know," Ira said.

"Ira is one of our best customer service advocates," said Sommers.

In an economy like today's, keeping and making customers happy is important.

"People with disabilities want to be part of our community. That's what we're about, but we also believe that it's really good for a business to participate in these— both for their bottom line and for the good that they do for their community," Hanley said.

Research shows that the spending power of people with disabilities is \$200 billion annually. To find out more about J. J.'s List, visit [www.jjslist.com](#).

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