

Employer interview — With Barb Reich, human resources/workers' compensation manager, Rogue Valley Medical Center (RVMC)

by Heather F. Grogan

Q When is the best time for a job applicant to let Rogue Valley Medical Center's (RVMC) job interviewer know he or she is a Preferred Worker?

A As soon as possible after the job offer is made. Job applicants can present their Preferred Worker card to the person who interviewed them or they can take the PW card to the Human Resource Office.

Q Are you concerned that if you hire someone who's been injured that they'll be more likely to have another injury?

A Not necessarily. I don't believe someone who has previously been injured on the job presents any greater risk than any other candidate. If the new employee activates his or her Preferred Worker benefits upon hire, RVMC is automatically protected against the costs of a new injury. This is a hiring advantage to RVMC, as an applicant who is not a Preferred Worker does not offer the same kind of guarantee.

Q If the top candidate for a position that requires the ability to lift 50 pounds states he or she is a Preferred Worker with a 30-pound lifting restriction, would you still consider hiring this person?

A Yes. A conditional offer can be extended to the candidate, and it would be based upon whether a worksite modification could be provided that would accommodate the Preferred Worker's 30-pound lifting limitation.

Q How do you know whether a job can be modified?

A We don't. When an employee who is a Preferred Worker needs his or her worksite modified, we contact the Preferred Worker Program worksite modification consultant (WMC). The WMC meets with the worker and supervisor to evaluate the worksite for changes that can be implemented to reduce or eliminate barriers for the employee. The WMC is the expert on ergonomic assessment and determines the changes that need to be made for the employee.

Q If RVMC has an employee injured on the job, do you use the employer-activated Preferred Worker benefits to return your employee to his or her job or other jobs at RVMC?

A Absolutely! RVMC values its employees, and we do whatever is possible to keep them!

Q If an employee with a Preferred Worker card has been working for RVMC for several months or longer, would you want him or her to offer Preferred Worker benefits now, even if the worker may not need a worksite modification?

A Yes! By activating his or her Preferred Worker benefits, our employee provides RVMC up to three years of protection from claims cost, should a new injury occur, and six months of 50 percent wage subsidy. Additionally the employee may be eligible for purchases such as clothing and tools. ■

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Register for our e-mail service

If you are looking for employment, we have a system that allows you to register by location to receive job postings. When an employer posts a job on the Preferred Worker Program Job Match site in the geographical location for which you are registered, an e-mail will be sent to you with a link to the job posting. For more information, call (800) 445-3948 or (503) 947-7588.



New direct link

To get to the online Preferred Worker Program or the Job Match site more quickly, use our new direct link, www.oregonpwp.info.

A worksite modification success story

by Heather F. Grogan

Ramiro, a 36-year-old butcher, injured his (dominant) right arm while working. His employer, a small rural-town grocery store, modified his regular job duties so Ramiro could return to work.

Meat-wrapping is an essential function of Ramiro's job. He was unable to perform this task due to the physical limitations from his on-the-job injury. The meat-wrapping station has a roll of stretch



wrap below the counter. Ramiro would use both hands to pull the stretch wrap to the counter and wrap the Styrofoam tray of meat. He would have to put the tray of meat on his knee and forcefully pull down on the ends of the stretch wrap to secure it around the tray.



Ramiro contacted the Preferred Worker Program (PWP) for worksite modification assistance. A PWP consultant met with Ramiro and his employer and analyzed all of his job tasks. Meat-wrapping was the only task that exceeded Ramiro's physical limitations. The amount of force Ramiro used to wrap the meat trays exceeded 20 pounds of force. Some days Ramiro did this job task repetitively for six hours, which resulted in continuous use of his right arm to push/pull and grasp.

After reviewing the meat-wrapping tasks, the PWP consultant, employer, and Ramiro agreed that an automated meat-wrapping machine would eliminate push/pull and grasp forces exceeding 20 pounds and repetitive use of his right arm.

The worksite modification cost \$41,372. The employer agreed to pay the \$16,372 over the \$25,000 the PWP paid. The employer said Ramiro is one of the store's best butchers and the additional cost for the automated meat-wrapping machine was well worth keeping such a good employee. The employer also benefited from premium exemption and wage subsidy, which reimbursed the employer half of the wages paid to Ramiro for his first six months of employment.

Ramiro said he now can do the meat-wrapping one-handed and he does not need to use his right arm at all. Ramiro said he is very happy to be able to do all of his job tasks without causing pain to his injured arm. He said the PWP assistance he received allows him to once more take pride in his job. ■



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Detachable Basin Lift Handle

by Heather F. Grogan

Worker disability

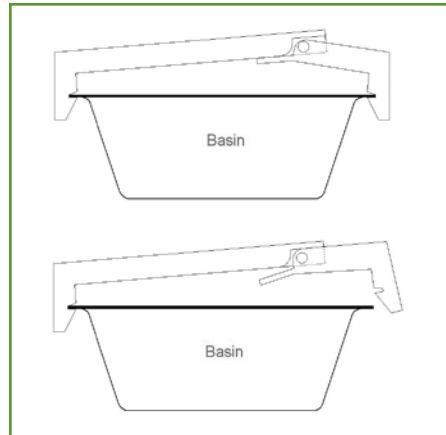
A 35-year-old sterile processing technician sustained a right arm injury. She had permanent limitations in using her right hand to grasp, pinch, and grip.

Work setting

The worker lifts up to 30 stainless steel basins by the rim, using a pinch grip to lift them. The basins are filled with surgical instruments and water and weigh up to 20 pounds.

Obstacle

Repeatedly pinching, gripping, and carrying basins 15 feet, which required frequent, forceful gripping with her right hand.



Modification

This basin lifter was custom-designed to eliminate using a pinch grip to lift the basins.

Cost of modifications

The basin lifts cost \$325 each. The employer purchased 10 lifts to keep at several workstations. ■



Meet Tony Guidone

by Ana Contreras



Tony Guidone

The Reemployment Assistance Unit (RAU) is pleased to announce that Tony Guidone has been hired as the newest worksite modification

consultant. Guidone has been with RAU for the past three months, and many of you may remember him from his time as a reimbursement technician providing support to the reemployment consultants and specialists in the Preferred Worker Program (PWP).

In June 2005, after a year with RAU, Guidone left to work for the Building Codes Division as an enforcement and licensing officer. Guidone's duties included investigating electrical, plumbing, and coding violations, as well as representing the division in administrative hearings. Guidone also participated in industry "licensing sweeps" that involved arriving unannounced at random contracting sites to ensure contractors were accredited and licensed. Guidone traveled all over the state to cities such as Astoria, Cave Junction, Bend, and Hermiston.

"I met a lot of interesting people," he said.

When Guidone realized RAU was looking for a new consultant, he

jumped at the opportunity to return to his old stomping ground and reconnect with past co-workers and friends.

"It's been great so far," he said. "I've been on some on-site calls and learned a lot, and I still have a lot more to learn."

Guidone and his wife, Lisa, who works for Polk County, live in Dallas with their two children, Justin and Ashley. Besides spending time with his family and Yorkshire terrier, Eddie, Guidone likes camping, woodworking, and golfing. His latest hobbies include riding his motorcycle and working with his son to restore a 63 AMC Rambler.

Guidone's e-mail address is anthony.a.guidone@state.or.us. ■

Address Service Requested

Frequently Asked Questions

by the Reemployment Specialists staff

Q Can a worker use the Preferred Worker benefits for self-employment?

A No, unless the injury that made the worker eligible for the Preferred Worker Program occurred in the course and scope of self-employment. In that case, the worker may use the benefits to return to the same self-employment or for employment other than self-employment.

Q I used my Preferred Worker move benefit to take a job with a company that has gone out of business. Can I use the move benefit again to relocate if I find a job more than 50 miles from my primary residence?

A No. Unfortunately, moving expenses are limited to one use per eligibility.

Q I need clothing, and my employer doesn't know I'm a Preferred Worker. Can I get clothing without letting my employer know I'm a Preferred Worker?

A No. The program is designed to partner employers and workers when you need to activate benefits. If you do not feel comfortable explaining the program benefits, we will be happy to assist you. You have three years from your hire date to request premium exemption. You must activate premium exemption before you request an Obtained Employment Purchase Agreement for clothing.

Q I've lost my Preferred Worker card. What should I do?

A You can get another Preferred Worker card by calling the Workers' Compensation Division Preferred Worker Program at (800) 445-3948 and asking for a replacement card. We'll send a duplicate along with program information and forms within a few days of your request. This will not extend the end date of your Preferred Worker eligibility. ■

