

Technology Working To Aid Disability

East Side Edition, a publication of the Defense Co - May 11, 2005

Published in the Defense Contract Management Agency's East Side Edition, a quarterly publication

By Amy Tansey, Contract Administrator, DCMA Hartford

Meet Mr. Luke Garvin, a 25-year-old man who conquered the odds and became a huge success, both professionally and personally, through the use of technology. Luke came to the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA), Aircraft Propulsion Operations (APO), Pratt & Whitney (APW), East Hartford, Conn., in May 2004. He was enrolled with the Disabilities Program as a co-op student while attending Rochester Institute of Technology. He earned credit for his summer work experience as the final piece of his education and then obtained a degree in mechanical engineering technology. Once he received his degree, Luke was offered employment through the use of a Schedule A hiring authority process, which gives the government the ability to permanently hire a person with disabilities. HE found it thrilling that even though he is hearing impaired, the federal government offered him an opportunity to do what he loves, engineering and learning!

"Luke is the first new entry-level engineer we have had at APW in a long time," said Mr. Ray Cloutier, the APW team leader of the Operational Engines team. "We felt that he would be a great candidate to start a mentoring plan with. Luke will be teamed up with other engineers across all of the various production centers at APW to accelerate his propulsion industry knowledge. The intent of this plan is to accelerate the learning process while providing a diverse propulsion education for Luke."

Due to Luke's incredible initiative, he is now involved in the performance-based management (PBM) strategy in the APO. Not only does he have a brilliant mind, but he has showcased his artistic skills when he designed the pamphlet for the APO PBM strategy that was provided at the fall Commanders Conference. Through this brochure development process Luke learned about many of DCMA's processes and customer/contractor relationships under a PBM umbrella. IN order to develop this pamphlet for others to use and understand, he took the time to break down and understand how DCMA processes work. It was a challenging project that he executed effortlessly.

Another project where Luke stood out above the rest was breaking down contractor data for the other government employees. Using Microsoft Excel and Access programs, he made the mountain of information user-friendly for the quality assurance specialists (QASs) and engineers. This is a key part of the PBM process that helps the QASs and engineers make decisions on corrective action requests and nonconformance and production issues. Management has been inspired by Luke's personal initiatives and his job performance. Mr. Cloutier said, "Luke has a unique blend that you don't often see."

Luke's former team leader Mr. Egils Vigants, now the business manager for the APO, was quite impressed with his can-do attitude, abilities and computer skills. "During the PBM activities and team interactions, we recognized that we would have to improve the communication to assure a more seamless communication and interaction for Luke and the team," said Mr. Vigants. Luke, ever the computer and technology pathfinder, researched a variety of options and found a federal government closed captioning service that is provided at no cost. It is a tool called Relay Conference Captioning (RCC) that is provided by the government and can be found at: <http://www.fedrcc.us>. Luke has been using this technology very successfully for many months for PBM and other routine meetings. This information has since been shared with Ms. Kim Appleton, the Equal Employment Opportunity counselor for DCMA East, and hopefully it will help others in need of improved communication, making a win-win situation for everyone.

This device can be a proactive way for other government agencies to utilize the capabilities and resources of their hearing impaired employees. The RCC service is simple to use. You schedule a time slot and then link a transcriber into the meeting through a speakerphone. The employee then uses a laptop to access the RCC Website where he or she is able to read a real-time transcript of the meeting. This system has made significant improvements for Luke in accessing information and participating in group meetings.

Regarding Luke's professional career and the use of RCC, Mr. Vigants said, "We welcome the review and consideration of this proactive solution to addressing our current communication shortcomings with Luke. This could be a pathfinder solution for other folks in our agency. Luke has really been an inspiration to many of us and has contributed significantly in his short time here. I see

nothing but promising horizons and contributions from this new and upcoming engineer."

Luke is prime example of how the combination of personal motivation and technological advances has enabled a valued employee to overcome his handicap.