

NTID Alums Awarded for Connecting Corporations and Deaf Students

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Originally connected by deafness and graduation from National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Gary W. Behm and Angela S. Officer are now connected by awards, their employers, and their commitment to improve and increase opportunities for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

The National Business and Diversity Council recently awarded Behm, IBM factory technology integration employee and 1981 NTID/RIT graduate in electrical engineering technology, its 2000 Silver Level Employee of the Year Award. The National Business and Disabilities Council presented its Silver Employee award to Officer in 1999.

As a campus recruiter, Behm brings new hires with disabilities to IBM from NTID/RIT and other colleges. He fosters relationships between hearing, deaf, and hard-of-hearing coworkers, students and citizens by teaching sign language classes in his community of Burlington, Vt., and teaming deaf and hard-of-hearing IBM employees with deaf children from a local school on Take Our Children To Work Day.

Officer, senior program manager for Sprint's Government Systems Division Federal Relay Service and 1988 NTID/RIT graphic design graduate, earned the RIT 2000 Distinguished Alumni Award for NTID. "RIT's Distinguished Alumni awards are presented annually to graduates who bring distinction to their college through their professional achievements," said Barbara Carney of RIT Alumni Relations.

Officer helped foster important relationships between NTID and the Sprint Foundation resulting in Sprint donating equipment and establishing the Sprint Visual Communications Center in NTID's Learning Center, allowing NTID students to be video-linked anywhere in the world.

Behm recently won first place for an IBM poster at a Florida Multicultural People In Technology conference. This poster gives an overview of a joint NTID/IBM venture to develop and recruit qualified NTID students for semiconductor maintenance technician positions in IBM Microelectronics division.

The NTID Automation Technologies program curriculum team conferenced twice with IBM on the video link provided by Sprint about applied robotics and semi-conductor technology. "These conferences were part of the overall establishment of the IBM/NTID partnership," said Thomas Raco, director of NTID's Center for Technical Studies. "Gary was part of both conferences. The Automation Technologies program will begin during the next academic year."

"This partnership has the potential to become a shining model, demonstrating the far-reaching benefits of collaboration between businesses and higher education," said Dr. Robert Davila, NTID CEO and an RIT vice president. "It is gratifying to know that targeting NTID curriculums to the needs of corporations is highly prized by our alumni and their employers."