

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **It Works for Many as Mill Neck Services Takes Part in Employer Recognition**

When asked about her job, Kelly Kildare is emphatic in her response. “I feel confident. I feel brave. I feel proud of myself,” she says. That she takes pride in her job, and herself, is clear to see. Her proud moment was recently highlighted at the annual “Works for Me” Awards Ceremony held by the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Kildare shared the spotlight with her employer, King Kullen Supermarkets which was selected as the OPWDD 2014 Large Business of the Year.

At the November 6 event, which took place at the Albany Museum, Kildare was joined by her family and several staff of Mill Neck Services (MNS), her supported employment agency (to view a video clip of the King Kullen segment, go to [www.opwdd.ny.gov/](http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/) and click on the 2014 Works for Me Celebration). MNS is a three-time winner of the “Works for Me” Award, which is given by OPWDD to honor businesses from across New York State that have a proven track record of hiring individuals with developmental disabilities. These businesses have recognized the worthy contributions that individuals with disabilities can make in the workplace and hiring these workers makes sound business sense. MNS was pleased to nominate King Kullen this year, recognizing the corporation’s contribution to this practice.

An alumna of Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf, Kildare’s path to employment began with the school’s Vocational Program, where she gathered experience in a number of settings. One such setting, the school store, provided practice in money management and learning customer service. Kildare joined the MNS Job Club, worked on her interview skills and participated in the Day Hab program to gain further experience through volunteer opportunities.

Despite developmental challenges and being Deaf, Kildare has made great strides in her position as a cashier at the King Kullen store in Bellmore. With her friendly personality and willingness to learn, she has progressed steadily since she began working. Jeff Burns, the store’s Assistant Manager, says he offered her the position based on what she could bring to the job, the same as with any potential hire. Over the course of the year, she proved him right.

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Burns says, “Kelly started out a bit timid, that was normally what I thought was going to happen, but she grew into a better cashier, became more conscious of her work. She came along in the past year very well.”

Kildare has indeed grown into her job. She says she is learning to concentrate on scanning faster, has learned to count out her cash drawer independently and to offer good customer service, making her popular with shoppers and coworkers alike. Her overall comfort level is apparent when she refers to her coworkers as her “second family.”

So it seems employment has made a noticeably positive impact in Kildare’s life. Her joining King Kullen has given her opportunities to grow, not just in the space of her job, but in her life beyond the store too. As Donna Spano, Kildare’s Job Coach, notes, “I feel this job gave her more confidence outside work as well, to accomplish things. Motivate herself.” For Kildare, this has meant taking responsibility for the other aspects that relate to her employment, like learning how to take public transportation and making sure her uniform is ready ahead of her scheduled work day.

Believing in the transformative power of a job, Mill Neck Services continually advocates for candidates with disabilities, especially since the rate of unemployment for people with disabilities is significantly higher than for the general population. Creating a culture of inclusive employment has the potential to work for all; from the individual with a disability, the employer who is rewarded with qualified, dedicated workers, the agencies that strive to match the two, all the way to entire communities.

Established in 1986, Mill Neck Services (MNS) has placed more than 1,000 deaf, hard of hearing or otherwise disabled workers in over 400 businesses operating on Long Island. To find out how the qualified candidates in the Steps to Success Program at MNS can help your business, please contact Marta Reeger, Coordinator of Employment Services at [mreeger@millneck.org](mailto:mreeger@millneck.org) or 516-922-3818, ext. 315. Mill Neck Services is part of the Mill Neck Family of Organizations, which also includes Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf, founded by Lutheran Friends of the Deaf in 1947. For more information, please call 516-922-4100 or visit [www.millneck.org](http://www.millneck.org).

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Kelly Kildare, (left) a cashier at King Kullen, is seen here with Marta Reeger, Coordinator of Employment Services for Mill Neck Services at the November 6 “Works for Me” Awards Ceremony where King Kullen was recognized as Large Employer of the Year for 2014. Kildare and Reeger are signing the letter “K,” in recognition of Kildare’s initials and her employer’s.