

Jergens has been on two journeys of inclusion. One dealing with special needs kids becoming part of Jergens and the other program is to support Second Chance individuals. Each had separate paths and both have benefited both the individuals and the culture of Jergens.

The steps we took with the Special needs program was to partner with a local program supporting special needs kids. This program call CEVEC is a consortium of 18 high schools where each school brings their kid everyday to CEVEC. CEVEC then brings the kids to individual locations throughout the county to learn soft skill and specific skills.

How this worked is the Jergens management met with the CEVEC team to see if the idea could work. Concerns whether this might be seen by the Jergens team as a distraction. The reverse turned out to be the case. The Jergens employee took each student under their wings and mentored them. Everyday two school teachers from CEVEC would greet the school bus at Jergens as their kids learned new skills. Today a number of the CEVEC kids have become part of the full time Jergens team.

Most communities have programs like CEVEC in Cleveland. It takes management to be supportive and someone to reach out to the local program. What helps make this work is the program provides the transportation and the two school teachers to help throughout the day.

Regarding the Second Chance Program a group of about 15 manufacturing companies formed a group under the local MEP (MAGNET) to focus on the Skills Shortage. A group identified as being under served by manufacturing were the Second Chance individuals returning from incarceration. This population is growing the needs for a skilled workforce was also growing. The first step was for each company to change their employment applications removing the "Box" prohibiting these individuals from even making an application. The next step was for Magnet to work with local service agency to create a program for teaching soft skills and life needs. The group felt that specific training for individual companies would be best done at the company level.

This program has now placed over 200 formerly convicted felons into manufacturing companies throughout the county. The value in the job and the sense of purpose has help all of these individuals. Having a job and a place to be has resulting in not a single day of recidivism for the entire 200 group.