

**Mike Waldron**

VP of Talent & Inclusion

**Q: Tell us about your role with BSN SPORTS and what you love most about your job.**

**A:** *I am the Vice President of Talent and Inclusion at Varsity Brands. In this role, I lead the talent acquisition, diversity & inclusion, leadership development, performance management, succession planning and engagement strategy for the enterprise. What I love most about my job is the ability to create environments where our team members can be their best.*

**Q: What does National Disability Employment Awareness month mean to you?**

**A:** *National Disability Employment Awareness month is important because it is one moment where we take time to recognize the contributions that people who are members of the disability community make to the workforce and to educate all of us on how we can all be more inclusive to our colleagues who have various disabilities. Even though there are more than 60 million Americans who have disabilities, this community is often overlooked. Its also important to increase awareness because statistically, if we live long enough, most of us will at one time or another become members of this community to some degree.*

**Q: What are some typical challenges that people with disabilities face in the workplace?**

**A:** *Having a brother who has Muscular Dystrophy, I have seen the challenges he goes through at work. Whether people work for large or small companies, many of the challenges are consistent across the board. This can range from simply being able to get into their workplace, to not being able to use restrooms due to the space layout, to challenges communicating with colleagues and customers. I find it interesting that in some cases, the general population doesn't key into some of the distinct needs of people with various ability challenges and in other instances, it can't get past seeing a disability and often times forgets to see that value that individuals can bring to a team.*

**Q: What is one thing you would like your co-workers to know about people with disabilities?**

**A:** *There are several things I would like people to know. First, people with disabilities are just like people without disabilities in that they have similar goals, concerns and want the same opportunities as everyone else. Second, they can contribute and be as valuable a team member as someone without a disability. Third, not all disabilities are visible and we all need to increase awareness so that we don't inadvertently make things more difficult for colleagues who have disabilities and instead can become helpful team members to them.*

**Q: What are somethings your co-workers could do differently that would make life easier for a person with a disability?**

**A:** *I think there are a variety of things we can do at work. These range from learning preferred communications methods, being sure to include them in meetings and asking for their expertise (seeing beyond the disability) to being flexible and asking people what assistance they need, if any (don't always assume someone with a disability needs assistance or assume what they need).*