

Radio host:

We're here at IBVI. And, uh, had you guys ever, let's be honest now, you guys here, have you guys ever heard of IBVI before this? You've heard the commercial.

Radio host 2:

I've heard the commercials. That's it.

Radio host 3:

Heard the commercial. And then I go to Greenfield Park to take bird pictures. Driving by, I saw the sign. And I-

Radio host:

Okay.

Radio host 3:

... I was curious about this building and surprised at how big the whole complex is.

Radio host:

Well, joining us-

Radio host 2:

Yeah, it's really big.

Radio host:

... uh, Emmanuel Vouvakis, who is the Chief Innovation Officer here at IBVI, and Emily Merced. Uh, good morning both of you. Thank you for joining us. How are you guys doing? Doing good?

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

Doing great. Thanks for having us.

Radio host:

Okay. All right. Emmanuel, explain what your job is here at chief innovation officer. What, what is IBVI all about? What do you guys do here at Industries for the Blind and, um, you know, Visually Impaired?

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

So, we're in the people business. What we do is we employ people that are blind or visually impaired and provide opportunities and upward mobility. That's our goal. So, we have, um, a set of, uh, of, um, of, of systems that we have in place and that we constantly try to improve to help facilitate that. So, what that means is helping people do their jobs better, easier and have ... be able to access jobs that they normally would not.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

So, my job as Chief Innovation Officer is basically to, to, uh, identify and bring these, these processes, technologies in to help and facilitate that. So, we have our, our chief information officer, for example, who, who brings in all these, these great tools and products. And my job is basically to kind of figure out how then to make them kind of work with, with our employees.

Radio host:

Okay.

Radio host 2:

I was shocked to see that at 70% of the people who are blind or visually impaired are unemployed.

Radio host:

Yeah.

Radio host 2:

That is a shocking number.

Radio host:

It really is. Uh, Emily, explain what, uh, what you do here. Uh, well, well, good morning, first of all. And, uh, how long have you been here at IBVI?

Emily Merced:

Good morning. I've been working at IBVI for about two years and seven months now. Uh, and I am, uh, currently a machine operator. Uh, but I've been, um, going up, uh, since material hand, uh, material, uh, uh, hand assembly. My bad. Uh, and, uh ... yeah. It ... I run different machines, uh-

Radio host:

Okay.

Emily Merced:

... different speeds. And, uh-

Radio host:

What is the, um ... So, what is this campaign that you guys are doing, the IBVI Can? What is that all about?

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

It's, it's basically a campaign to bring awareness to our mission, to our cause and to the things that we do and to, uh, our business and industry in general, because there, there are blind agencies all over the country. And basically in our focus in this organization is not only to bring attention to our company and our organization but to the overall mission and sensitize people.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

So, what we try to do is, uh, through different types of campaign like the IBVI Can and, and, uh, other campaigns that we've had, uh, Can You See This Campaign?. I don't know, last year we had some ... I don't know if you guys saw-

Radio host:

Okay.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

... them on the buses.

Radio host:

I did, yeah.

Radio host 2:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Radio host:

Absolutely.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

Yeah. So, so, so that, that's basically to raise awareness that, that, you know, we are alou-, around. Because the question that I ask is when I go out in other organizations is, how many people that are blind do you see in your company?

Radio host:

Wow, yeah.

Radio host 2:

Yeah.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

And generally the question is none ... the answer, I'm sorry.

Radio host:

Wow.

Radio host 2:

Yeah.

Radio host:

Correct. Yes, yes. Um, how many work at this facility? And, uh, how many do you guys employ?

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

So, we're at about I think 200-, and, uh, 60 people, I think, uh, overall. And I think we have about, uh, almost about 90-some number in here.

Radio host:

Okay. Yeah-

Radio host 3:

Emily, what does it mean to you, IBVI? What does it mean to you?

Emily Merced:

Well, for me, it means, um, opportunity for life. And, uh, it's just you can ... I never thought I was going to have a chance to just work normally like anybody else, just because I am visually impaired. I'm nocturnally blind, but I still have my difficulties getting around, like, uh, say a normal person. But, um, for me, it's just, it ... I'm telling you, it means everything to have this job and this opportunity.

Radio host:

How can people help or what can they do if this is something they want to get involved with?

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

So, they, they, uh, uh ... So, we make products. We're not, uh, we're not, uh, a charity organization. Some people, uh, believe that we do charity work and, you know, we take donations. We don't. So, we work with organizations like Vision Forward that helps people and trains people that are blind.

Radio host:

I know you guys do a lot of stuff. I mean, the military is your ... The, you provide the military and have for decades.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

Exactly. So, so for example, the kits that we make, kits are, are these big boxes, like Pelican cases, of foam that we put with different products in that we sell to the military.

Emily Merced:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

And one of the programs that we have, uh, the program manager [inaudible 00:04:44], we run that [inaudible 00:04:45]. He said that that was the best program for kitting that he's ever seen in terms of quality, in terms of, of accuracy, of, of ... Because we put hundreds of tools in one of these kits.

Radio host:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

And they all be, have to be in a very specific place.

Radio host 2:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

So, our employees that do that are pretty much blind or visually impaired. Now, we do have, uh, visual inspection and we do, uh, certify every kit that is perfect before it deploys.

Radio host:

Hm, right.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

Because you can't have something that deploys to the field, uh, and not have it, um, basically perfect.

Radio host:

Well, we really appreciate you guys inviting us here.

Radio host 2:

Yes.

Radio host:

We, we appreciate the opportunity for us to unveil and tell everybody in our audience who may not know of IBVI what it's all about. And, uh, we'll put the link up for sure on our Facebook page if people want to learn more about it. Thank you again for having us here.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

Thank you for being here.

Radio host:

We really appreciate it.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

We appreciate it.

Emily Merced:

Thank you for inviting.

Radio host:

Thank you, Emily. We appreciate it. And nice meeting both of you.

Emmanuel Vouvakis:

Thank you-

Radio host:

Uh, we have more from IBVI coming up. It is 6:25. Dave, Doreen and Gino.