

Announcer:

It's mornings with Dave, Dorene and Gino, on Milwaukee's Hometown Rock.

Dave Luczak:

Good morning and thank you for listening. Uh, we are broadcasting live this morning, if you've just tuned in, from IBVI. So you're saying, "What's IBVI?" Industries for the Blind and Visually Impaired and we've got some very special guests joining us right now. Uh, we got Danielle McCann. Danielle, thank you so much, we really appreciate, how are you?

Danielle McCann:

I'm good, thanks for having me.

Dave Luczak:

And you've got Schultz with you?

Danielle McCann:

I do.

Dave Luczak:

Uh, how old is Schultz?

Danielle McCann:

Schultz is five.

Dorene Michaels:

Aww.

Dave Luczak:

He's five. And, um, Danielle was telling us off air that when Schultz puts his harness on, that's his, that's his business suit, you said.

Danielle McCann:

Yes.

Dave Luczak:

So he knows he's ready to go to work.

Dorene Michaels:

He's very calm.

Danielle McCann:

Yes.

Dorene Michaels:

But now, when you take the harness off when he gets out of the business suit, different story (laughs)?

Danielle McCann:  
He's bonkers (laughing).

Dave Luczak:  
I love that.

Danielle McCann:  
Yes.

Dorene Michaels:  
Aww.

Dave Luczak:  
And we also, we also have Alison Fortney here. Alison, thank you so much for joining us as well. How are you today?

Alison Fortney:  
I'm fine, thank you. Thank you for inviting both of us.

Dave Luczak:  
Oh, you're more than welcome. So, Alison, you're are account and e-commerce specialist. What do you focus on a- and what is your day to day job?

Alison Fortney:  
So I work with IBVI custom, and the division I'm in specifically, we work with a volunteer organization, it's called AmeriCorps and they work with a, you know, number of other volunteer organizations across the nation, so we have a website where people can order t-shirts, polo shirts, sweatshirts, tote bags, hats, like, you name it, it's on the website. They order all sorts of gear for their organization but where I come in, is when people want to customize these garments or these different items with maybe the AmeriCorps logo, and then they want their logo. So you know, that's, you know, that's what I do-

Dave Luczak:  
Okay.

Alison Fortney:  
I, you know, I find out you know, hey what would you like printed and where, how many t-shirts do you want-

Dave Luczak:  
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Fortney:  
... you know, do you want it screen printed, digitally printed and lately, people have been ordering a lot of PPE, so that's face masks and hand sanitizer for the most part.

Gino Salomone:  
You sound like you really love your job.

Alison Fortney:  
I do (laughs).

Dave Luczak:

Yeah. You know what? It's, and it's, it's easy to tell and that's, that's fun to listen to. It's fun to hear when somebody really enjoys what they do. Danielle, um, as a customer- you're the customer service oh- o- operations manager and you've worked up to a management role and we talked about this last hour that these are not just, uh, busy work kind of jobs. These are upwardly mobile jobs where you have an opportunity to, to grow, both professionally and also personally, is that not correct?

Danielle McCann:

Yeah, definitely. Um, so I started out working downstairs, uh, on our awesome manufacturing floor. And then I worked my way up through several roles and now I'm, um, managing the customer service team.

Dave Luczak:

That's so cool.

Dorene Michaels:

And you work with those, the readers that Emanuel was telling us about, right?

Danielle McCann:

Uh, s- on the computer, yeah-

Dorene Michaels:

Yeah.

Danielle McCann:

So, ou- our screenwriter's called JAWS, it stands for Job Access With Speech, and it basically any text that you see on your computer screen, it reads out loud.

Gino Salomone:

Okay.

Dave Luczak:

And who, and Emanuel was explaining how you're able to multi-task so much more efficiently than those of us who are sighted, uh, and as Emanuel pointed out, those of us who are sighted, when we try to really focus and concentrate, we close our eyes. And it's something that you live with every day. You're so able to stay focused. Do you find that in your role as a customer service manager, operations manager, does it help to be able to convey what you're dealing with and what your situation is to those of us who are sighted? Are you able to convey to those who call in and to your staff what the experience is like for those of us who don't really understand?

Danielle McCann:

Um, sometimes we do. The main times that we actually do, so we actually like it when our customers don't realize that we're blind, because it proves our point without us saying anything.

Dorene Michaels:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Gino Salomone:

Right.

Danielle McCann:

The only time that it really ... we kinda have to say something is if they send pictures, and then we say, you know, our screen readers don't digest those really well, can you type out what you're saying? And then-

Dave Luczak:

Gotcha.

Danielle McCann:

... they, they react to that.

Dave Luczak:

That's awesome. Um, I know that Gino's asked this of a couple of our guests today, but what does this place mean to you, IBVI?

Danielle McCann:

Uh, it means that I can be a productive member of society, right? So I, I don't, I think that there's the misconception that people with disabilities are someone to be pitied or, or to be given charity and having a job, you know, I pay taxes and, you know-

Dave Luczak:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Danielle McCann:

... make my own way in the world and I think that that's the main thing that it, this job has afforded me.

Gino Salomone:

Can I ask you about Schultz, how you got him, how they matched him up with you?

Danielle McCann:

Yeah, so they, so I went to Morristown, New Jersey to a place called The Seeing Eye. And they are the oldest guide dog school in the world and they match you by checking out your lifestyle, the way, you know, your speed of walk, your gait, um, and it's magic, too. There's a little piece of magic.

Dorene Michaels:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Gino Salomone:

I bet.

Dave Luczak:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Oh yeah, yeah. It's- that- that's the chemistry thing there.

Dorene Michaels:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Danielle McCann:

Yeah.

Dorene Michaels:

Well, they say that too, when you, when you pick out any animal that they actually, that animals pick you. You don't pick them.

Dave Luczak:

Right.

Danielle McCann:

Yeah.

Dave Luczak:

Alison, IBVI ... when somebody says to you, "Wh- what does it mean to you, what do you do there?"

Alison Fortney:

It-

Dave Luczak:

What do you say?

Alison Fortney:

It means community for me. It also means standing up for the rights of people who are blind and visually impaired because I'm also the advocate in training right now, and what that means is we're part of a national organization, National Industries for the Blind. And so every year, there's a public policy day in Washington DC on Capitol Hill, and last year, I had the privilege of being able to attend, and so what we do is we go around to the different legislators you know, in our state, and we tell them why blind employment matters. Because like you said this morning, 70% you know, of the blind and visually impaired population is under-employed or unemployed. And so that's part of our job is to make them aware, you know, of the situation and then get assistance from them-

Dave Luczak:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alison Fortney:

... you know, and help create more jobs for the community.

Dave Luczak:

All in all, at the end of the day though, I can see how, not only do you feel like you've put in an honest day's work, but what you're doing is really meaningful and that's not something that everybody can say-

Dorene Michaels:

No.

Dave Luczak:

... in life.

Dorene Michaels:

And you guys are passionate about it.

Dave Luczak:

And that's, uh, that says a lot about working here and the environment you're working in. Thank you for your time. We really appreciate it.

Danielle McCann:

Thanks for having us.

Dave Luczak:

All right, thank you.

Alison Fortney:

Yes, thank you.

Dave Luczak:

Once again, we're at IB ... they did a great job, come on-

Dorene Michaels:

Yes, they did.

Dave Luczak:

We have a crowd way be- we're socially distanced, by the way.

Dorene Michaels:

Yeah (laughing).

Dave Luczak:

We're, you know, if you're tuned in, we're all very far apart, masks, the whole thing. Well, I should probably put one then, then you wouldn't have to listen to me.

Dorene Michaels:

(laughing).

Dave Luczak:

Uh ... that, uh (laughs), will lead us to break and we've got, on the other side, your KLH clips update.