

Delaware North's Employment of Individuals with Disabilities Nets Employer of Year Award for Bridgestone Arena

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Nov. 30, 2011) – [Delaware North Companies](#), the [food and retail concessions partner](#) of the Nashville Predators, has made it part of its employee recruitment effort in recent years to hire individuals with disabilities. That effort recently resulted in an employer of the year award for Bridgestone Arena.

The Nashville Area Employment Consortium and Tennessee Business Leadership Network selected Bridgestone Arena as one of five employers of the year at the organizations' fifth annual luncheon on Oct. 25. In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the organizations partner each October to honor businesses that have been successful in providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Delaware North has hired several people for its Bridgestone Arena [food](#) and [retail](#) operations through the Park Center, a non-profit organization in Nashville that provides services and employment opportunities for those with mental illness. One of them, a Delaware North employee at Bridgestone Arena since April 2010, nominated the company and location for the award.

“We have worked with several agencies that assist individuals with varied employment challenges, most notably the Park Center,” said Tom Gallo, general manager for Delaware North Companies Sportservice at Bridgestone Arena. “This award is something everyone at Bridgestone Arena can take pride in.”

Gallo said Delaware North has hired arena employees through other agencies besides Park Center, including Catholic Charities, Operation Stand Down, Pride Developmental Services, Room in the Inn, and Goodwill.

"Delaware North has been a great partner and is to be commended for this well-deserved recognition and commitment to the Nashville community," said Sean Henry, president and chief operating officer of the Nashville Predators. "Delaware North has been proactive in its customer service to our guests for the last 15 years, created jobs and opportunities within the facility's food service and been innovative in developing programs that give back to the community in a variety of ways."

Delaware North employs more than 300 local residents at Bridgestone Arena and also employs another 100 at restaurants it operates at [Nashville International Airport](#). Gallo said the company has been in the Music City for several decades and is a contributor to the local community in a number of ways in addition to its employment of individuals with special needs.

To supplement its arena workforce, Delaware North works with dozens of Nashville-area non-profit organizations to operate Bridgestone Arena concessions. To raise vital funds for their missions, the organizations provide volunteers in exchange for a share of the sales. Gallo said that during the 2010-11 hockey season, about 1,500 volunteers helped their organizations raise nearly \$550,000.

During the season, Delaware North also donated more than \$167,000 in food and money to various organizations, primarily by providing at-cost or discounted catering services for eight events. This included a major donation in conjunction with the series of concerts held by Garth Brooks to raise funds for Nashville flood relief efforts, as well as donations to Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, the Muscular Dystrophy Association and several Nashville Predators Foundation charitable events.

The company also collects unused prepared food from concession areas and kitchens after games

and events at the arena and provides it to The Room in the Inn, a Nashville non-profit organization that provides human services programs including a shelter for the homeless.

The other companies honored at the Oct. 25 luncheon were Swiftwick, Hampton Inn, Publix Fieldstone Farms and Primrose School Hendersonville.

The Nashville Area Employment Consortium is a collaborative group of employment service professionals that works closely with the Tennessee Business Leadership Network to provide information to the business community about the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities. Activities include Lunch and Learn events, Disability Employment Month in October, and an Annual Awards Banquet in October.

The Tennessee Business Leadership Network provides employers with education and resources, and helps organizations realize the business imperative of including individuals with disabilities in the workforce and marketplace.