

Outstanding disability employer

Kowalski's Markets has been named an outstanding disability employer by Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR). Clients from Merrick are employed in six Kowalski's Markets, including locations in White Bear Lake and Shoreview. The grocer was nominated by Merrick Inc., a Vadnais Heights nonprofit that provides life enrichment and employment support to 375 adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

"The family-owned business was one of

the first grocers in the state of Minnesota to recognize the value added to their business when employing people with disabilities," said John Wayne Barker, executive director of Merrick. The partnership began in 2000, with a Merrick crew at the Kowalski's Woodbury location, and today the grocer employs 28 people with disabilities across six of its stores. Some are direct hires and others are on work crews. At the markets, clients from Merrick bag groceries, clean cafes, stock shelves, and work behind the scenes in the delis and kitchens.



SUBMITTED

Front row: Anna Johnson, Merrick direct support professional, and clients Caleb, Kris, Bob and Trisha. Back row: Mike Oase, Kowalski's Markets' chief operating officer, Kris Kowalski Christiansen, Kowalski's Markets' chief executive officer, Julie Johnson, president of Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation, and John Wayne Barker, executive director of Merrick Inc.

