

THE *Scotts Miracle Gro* Garden

Coaching the Krew

CHRIS NEVER THOUGHT his love of sports would one day translate to his job as a sales manager. While coaching young kids in various sports, he performed the basic job duties of teaching skills, running drills and getting his young players prepared for the game. But anyone he has coached knows that he was doing a lot more than that.

Chris Rivera joined the company as a merchandiser in the spring of 2016 and is now in his third season as a sales manager. Two of his team members, **Jessie** and **Elliott**, are part of a program called Ken's Krew. This organization was created in 1997 by parents who were seeking a post-high school path to employment for their kids with developmental disabilities. Candidates apply to the program and are placed with a corporate partner after an assessment phase that ensures the program is a good fit.



Chris Rivera

THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

VP of Field Sales **Stephen Carboneau** and Regional Sales Director **Brendan King** worked with Joe Bosco and Chris Rivera on creating this partnership and pilot program with Ken's Krew and the Northport Home Depot in East Northport, New York. The approach to working with our Ken's Krew associates focuses on the structure and routines of their day-to-day work. This has been done in order to create the perfect environment to help them thrive personally and professionally.



Jessie and Elliott

District Market Manager **Joe Bosco** says, "Throwing too much responsibility on an individual [with developmental disabilities] at one time can be overwhelming and stressful, and it can lead to a lot of anxiety. This does not provide good results to anybody. So we focus on learning a routine and one that works best for them."

Chris has provided hands-on training for Jessie and Elliott. He shows them in-store execution, from packing out products to safety awareness while they work in the store. He also prepared them with product knowledge training so that they can answer any questions that consumers have to improve their lawn or garden.

A vocational coordinator from Ken's Krew is on hand during their shifts for support. They provide direct feedback on the job they are doing and advice on how they can improve so that their skills and qualifications can shine. Joe says, "This is not just about getting paid. It's truly about enhancing job skills and qualifications so that they can provide for themselves."

The veteran team of Territory 56 has helped speed up the learning process. Chris also says, "I've gotten to know Jessie and Elliott very well since we work together on a weekly basis. They both were very shy when they first started. They even lived in the same apartment complex and didn't know each other. Now, they're hanging out together on the weekends, and I've seen such a big confidence boost. It's so rewarding to see."

"Thank you for your kind words [during the virtual ceremony]. I am passionate about what I do and it is great for me to see that people like you can be recognized for opening your heart and minds to see the positive effect you are having on people's lives."

— **Alana Doran**, Ken's Krew Suffolk County Vocational Coordinator

THE KREW IN FLORIDA

Our D33 Team in Florida has also been working with merchandisers who joined our company through Ken's Krew since March. Kaitlyn joined SM **Nick Vitols** team, under Regional Sales Director South **Brent Hall** and DMM **Danny Bonilla**, and she has made some amazing professional and personal accomplishments in her short time here. (We'll be sharing Kaitlyn's story in the near future.) As a result of her success, another Ken's Krew candidate joined SM **PJ Maramba's** team in August.

RECEIVING RECOGNITION

In October as part of **National Disability Employment Awareness Month** (NDEAM), our company was recognized by the New York State Department of Education for our inclusive hiring practices and diversity in the workplace. The virtual ceremony included parents who talked about the positive impact that has been made on their child. They may not have had this type of opportunity if programs like these did not exist.

"As rewarding as it is to help people in their gardens," says Joe, "it is really cool to have this kind of opportunity at Scott's. It's amazing to be able to help someone in this way."

In regards to being a coach, Chris says that he does use a lot of sports analogies and bases many aspects of the job around a sports theme because it's easy to relate to. "I guess being a coach has helped me as I've grown my career," he says. This is most definitely true.

Beyond the skills for the job, Chris has taught social skills, discipline, patience and teamwork. And for our Ken's Krew associates he will more than likely leave a lasting impression—a true hallmark of any great coach. ● — Dianna Caspary

