

# communiqué

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO - COLORADO SPRINGS

## New workers bring fresh perspective

There are some new workers on campus and they're shaking things up.

Facilities Service, a department where workers think it's not only normal to have lunch together every day but to actually look forward to it, recently hired a deaf tradesman and two cognitively impaired custodians via Goodwill Staffing Services in an effort to expand the notion of what comprises a traditional hiring pool.

The results are surprising.

One worker says he feels a sense of gratitude for the opportunity. Another says he feels a bit humbled by the experience.

And these comments aren't coming from the new hires.

Dave Tafoya, an apprentice tradesman, when queried about his deaf co-worker, Sam Wilding replied: "I don't see Sammy as having a disability. He's teaching me. Every day I learn something new."

Diane Ferrell, accounting technician, Facilities Service, was promptly given a five-minute lecture by one of the Goodwill custodians on how to improve her self-esteem after saying, "what I did was so stupid," after noticing an office mistake.

"Jerry told me that people just have different abilities and that nobody is stupid," Ferrell said shaking her head incredulously. "He and Todd are two of the sweetest guys you ever want to meet."

Jerry Wasinger and Todd Pritchard, hired as dayshift custodians under a job-share arrangement, fill a void for hard-working and loyal janitors.

"They want to do the job and they want to get it right," said fellow custodian Monroe McDade, more commonly known on campus as "Mac." "They take a lot of pride in their work."



### Chat —

Dave Tafoya and Sam Wilding communicate while working on a project in the Campus Services Building.

Tom Ostenberg, who heads the Department of Facilities Service, says he encourages his staff to look beyond conventional applicants in an effort to bring diversity to the department. He's quick to point out, however, that these recent hires were more a case of best-man-for-the-job than anything else.

To help the new hires fit in even better, several months ago Ostenberg offered two free sign-language classes for any staffers who might be interested in learning to work with Wilding.

To Ostenberg's delight, 14 staffers took the sign language course.

Tafoya, who works with Wilding on a daily basis, quickly moved beyond the signs for "hammer," "key," "work-order," and "screwdriver," in order to speak with Wilding about more pressing matters such as a recent deer hunt.

"Sammy has become my teacher," said Tafoya. "He's teaching me two to three new words a day. And it's not just me. We all are learning to talk to him on his terms. Our repertoire is just growing."

Wilding says that the enthusiasm displayed by all the staff has made his job easier.

"I just want to say that I have never worked where everybody is very overwhelmingly willing to work with me and where everybody cares for each other," said Wilding.

### Overheard

*There are more similarities between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity than differences.*

— Arshad Yousufi, at a recent Ramadan dinner