Have you ever driven out of your way to a store or restaurant because you prefer the service or atmosphere there? Well, some customers have said just that—they will drive past a closer coffee shop or convenience store to go to “Teresa’s store” because she keeps it clean and inviting.

In February 2013, Ardmore Enterprises’ employment team assisted Teresa Dorsey with securing a job at a 7-Eleven located near a high-traffic municipal center and courthouse. During her morning weekday shift, Teresa maintains the coffee and beverage area for the many customers who shop at that very busy store.

Teresa’s illuminating smile illustrates the satisfaction she feels about working and being good at a job. She has learned new skills, refined existing skills, earned money (a steady income) and met many new people who respect her. She has added value and is considered an important member of the store’s team.

This is a new level of success for Teresa, a woman supported by Ardmore Enterprises since 1994. During those 19 years, Teresa has been a participant in the sheltered workshop and has had several jobs in the community. Even though she was briefly successful in those jobs she was unable to maintain employment for more than 90 consecutive days, until now.

Founded in 1963 to support individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities and their families, Ardmore Enterprises currently serves over 200 adults through employment, residential and in-home supports. As part of an ongoing commitment to best practices, Ardmore launched a strategic initiative that focuses on employment, economic independence and community involvement through activities designed around each individual’s needs, talents, preferences, and dreams. This vigorous transformation process means changing how services are delivered—strategically converting from all facility-based activities to community-based activities—and how Ardmore interacts with the community.

Through Ardmore’s new effort, many companies have found a population of workers who are excited and motivated to work. A few of the local organizations and businesses that have worked with Ardmore to place job seekers and volunteers include: The City of Bladensburg, The University of Maryland, IHOP, J’Ollie’s, Forman Mills, Community Forklift, Harmonis Beauty School, Martha’s Closet, and Meals on Wheels.

As Ardmore embarks on celebrating its 50th anniversary, it looks to educate and engage the community on supporting its mission of empowering people with disabilities.

“Prince George’s County is a burgeoning vibrant community and yet, imagine how much better we all will be when no one is seen as having a disability, but rather acknowledged and empowered for their numerous abilities,” said Ardmore’s CEO, Daphne Pallozzi.

Just like Teresa, people with disabilities enrich our communities and businesses by contributing their very best. They have a wide range of strengths and skills that make them very well-suited and qualified for a variety of jobs. And Ardmore is committed to doing whatever it takes to help the individuals they support discover and strengthen their personal assets to become contributors and be recognized for their abilities.

Ardmore has been recognized by Maryland Works as the 2013 Provider of the Year.