

Happy Day Plants: Growing Inclusion for Adults with Disabilities

By Bridget Hobart • Photos by Jessica Birmingham and Jennifer Pensy

Located on Main Street in downtown Longmont, Happy Day Plants' popular retail shop offers a diverse selection of quality houseplants and accessories while educating plant enthusiasts and serving as a vibrant community hub for events and celebrations. Since opening its doors in November 2021, the shop has been a leader in providing employment opportunities for adults with disabilities. In June 2024, they proudly attained 501(c)(3) non-profit status further strengthening their mission to create meaningful job placements in a nurturing and supportive environment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For many adults with disabilities, entering the traditional workforce can be a daunting journey filled with challenges and limited opportunities. Happy Day Plants aims to bridge that gap by providing their employees with tasks that build confidence and help them manage a range of responsibilities independently, all while offering nurturing support to help them achieve their goals.

Founder Jessica Birmingham explains the motivation behind this transformative step: "I believe we're not just offering valuable learning opportunities for our employees; we're also educating our customers, who may hold certain perceptions or generalizations about individuals with disabilities. The learning truly flows both ways."

Growing up in Manhattan, Kansas, Jessica has always felt a deep connection to nature. Her passion for plants and commitment to inclusion inspired her to create a space where everyone can thrive. The impact of Happy Day Plants extends beyond job creation. Her shop actively engages with the community by welcoming special education students from preschool to high school for immersive field trips that cultivate a love for nature and inspire entrepreneurship among these young minds. Additionally, Happy Day Plants hosts interactive plant workshops, open to the public, both in-store and throughout the community.

One of Jessica's proudest moments involves a special needs employee who initially struggled with anxiety over the shop's door chime. Each sound signaled the potential arrival of a customer, bringing a wave of nerves about engaging with someone new. "With patient support and by breaking the process down into small, manageable steps, she was happily greeting every customer by the end of our program," Jessica shares. "She now works for the St. Vrain Valley School District, watering plants throughout the area."



The Happy Day Plants Team



Planting seeds of success at Happy Day Plants

Jessica emphasizes the importance of having a clear mission, especially when navigating the challenges of running her business. "In both difficult moments and times of celebration, you must always return to your 'why.' That keeps you grounded," she explains.

As Happy Day Plants embarks on this exciting new chapter as a non-profit organization, they invite the community to support their mission in various ways. Whether you shop at the store, attend a workshop, sponsor a team member, support our mission, or host a private event, from birthday parties to team-building activities, the Happy Day Plants team can accommodate it all. Visit them at 501 Main Street in downtown Longmont, or explore their initiatives and offerings at happydayplants.com. Together, let's cultivate a brighter, more inclusive future for everyone! ♡

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