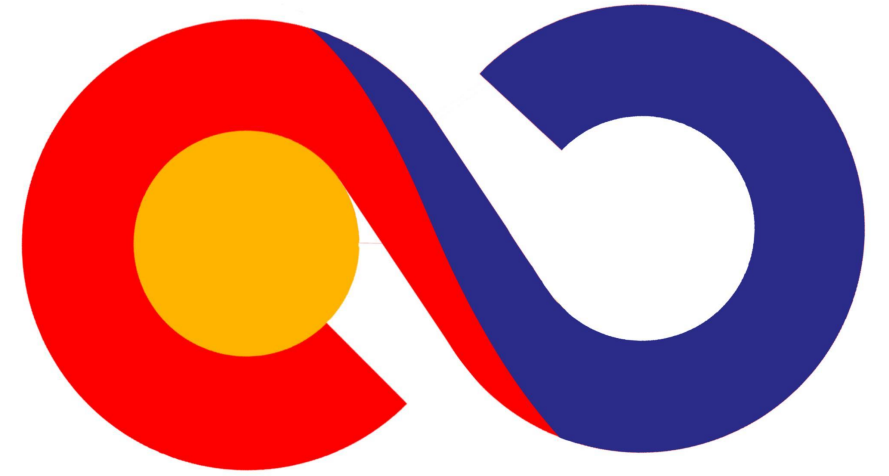


Colorado Neurodiversity  
Chamber of Commerce

&

Firefly Autism

Dr. Amanda Kelly, D.Psych.



# Firefly & CNDCC

- Firefly:
  - Support from pre-diagnosis all the way to adulthood
  - Transition to work programs
- CNDCC:
  - Providing education for businesses and leadership
  - Safe networking opportunities
  - Lifting up ND voices
  - ND owned businesses



# Terms and Definitions

Neurodiversity

The diversity of human brains and minds – the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.

Neurodivergent

Means having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of "normal."

Neurotypical

Means having a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within the dominant societal standards of "normal."

## Multiple Sources:

- ❖ People are rejected or fired after disclosing autism, ADHD, or another neuro-difference
- ❖ People mask autism and other neuro-differences to avoid stereotyping or discrimination at work.
- ❖ A 2020 report on U.K. employers: 50% of managers surveyed admitted they would not hire neurodivergent candidates.



# The Facts

20% of the population or  
1 in 5 people are  
neurodivergent

30 – 40% of  
neurodivergent adults  
are unemployed, 85% of  
autistic college  
graduates are  
unemployed.

Of employed  
neurodivergent  
individuals, 50% only  
disclose after being  
hired, and many do not  
disclose at all.

Masking or lack of  
disclosure can lead to  
burnout, depression,  
anxiety, or other  
difficulties

Neurodiversity has been  
broadly missing from  
DE&I efforts

# Yep...It's 2024...

Understood.org Study-  
April 2024 - 2,000+ U.S.  
ND adults (diagnosed with  
ADHD, dyslexia,  
dyscalculia, or another  
condition)

▶ 59% of Neurodivergent  
adults worry that disclosing  
their condition would  
negatively impact their  
career.

▶ 60% feel there is a  
stigma around asking for  
support.

▶ 49% do not know who  
to talk to about requesting  
a workplace  
accommodation within  
their company.

▶ 23% surveyed said they  
lost their job or were  
demoted after requesting  
accommodations.



# Benefits of Neurodiverse Hiring

Reliability and dependability

Honest and non-judgmental

High levels of concentration and focus

Attention to detail and accuracy

Factual knowledge, excellent memory for facts

Innovative thinkers

Thrive in a structured, well organised environment

Excellent problem-solving skills

Creative and imaginative



# Neuroinclusive Practices

Recruitment &  
Retention

Access  
Barriers

Standard  
Processes





# What Neurodistinct Individuals Want You to Know!

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Not every neurodivergent individual is the same.

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Some traits will be present in some individuals but not in others .

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Written communication is preferred – minimize the risk of interpreting incorrectly.

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Say exactly/literally what you mean.

---

Don't expect understanding of unspoken social cues.

---

“Personality” based interviewing or judgement is detrimental

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Set clear and transparent expectations

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Work environments do need to allow for flexibility under certain conditions. If not possible, explain and coordinate.

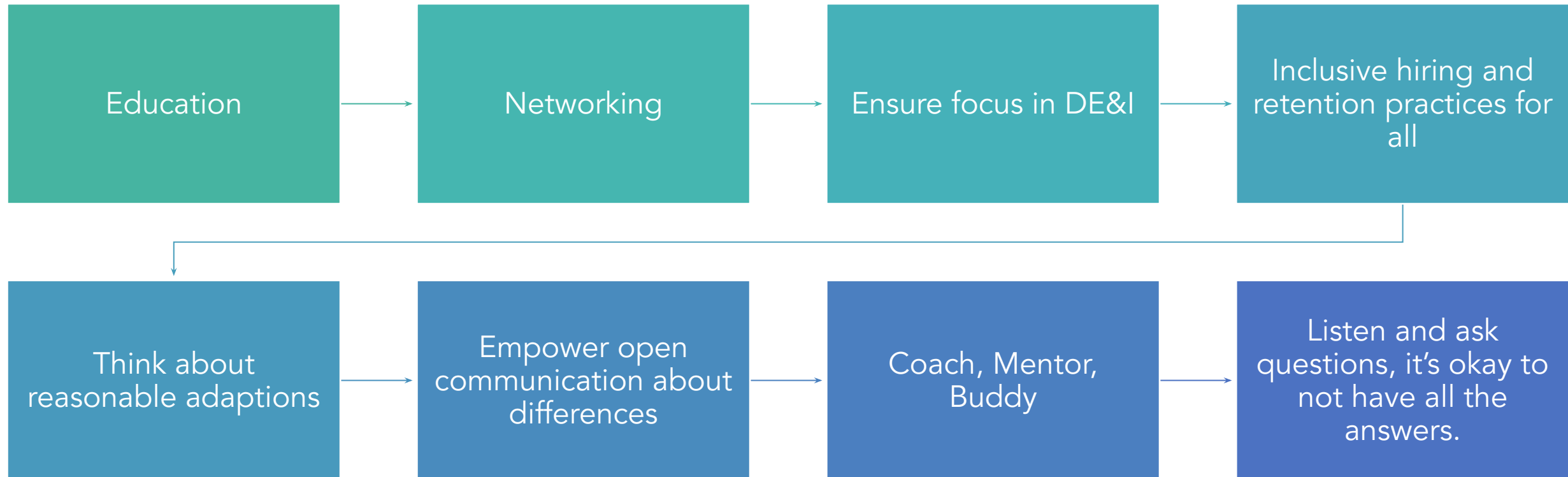
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Direct and objective feedback is best (i.e., not personal)

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[www.neurodiversityhub.org](http://www.neurodiversityhub.org)

# Next Steps



# Meaningful Work *Matters*



The Blue Star Recyclers Story

# Discovery...





# Serendipity...



# Why We Exist



Of the 50 million people in the US with a diagnosed or documented disability, less than 25% are participating in the labor force.



Of the 50 million tons of electronic waste produced globally each year, less than 20% is recycled. Yet over 95% can be reused or repurposed.



# Mission



Recycle electronics to create jobs for people with dis**Abilities**.

# Nonprofit Social Enterprise

- Earned income covers 90%+ of operating expenses
- 80% of workforce has diagnosed/documentated disability
- Mission fulfillment produces measurable triple-bottom line impact



**TOP NONPROFIT  
COMPANY WINNER!**

colorado**biz** 2018

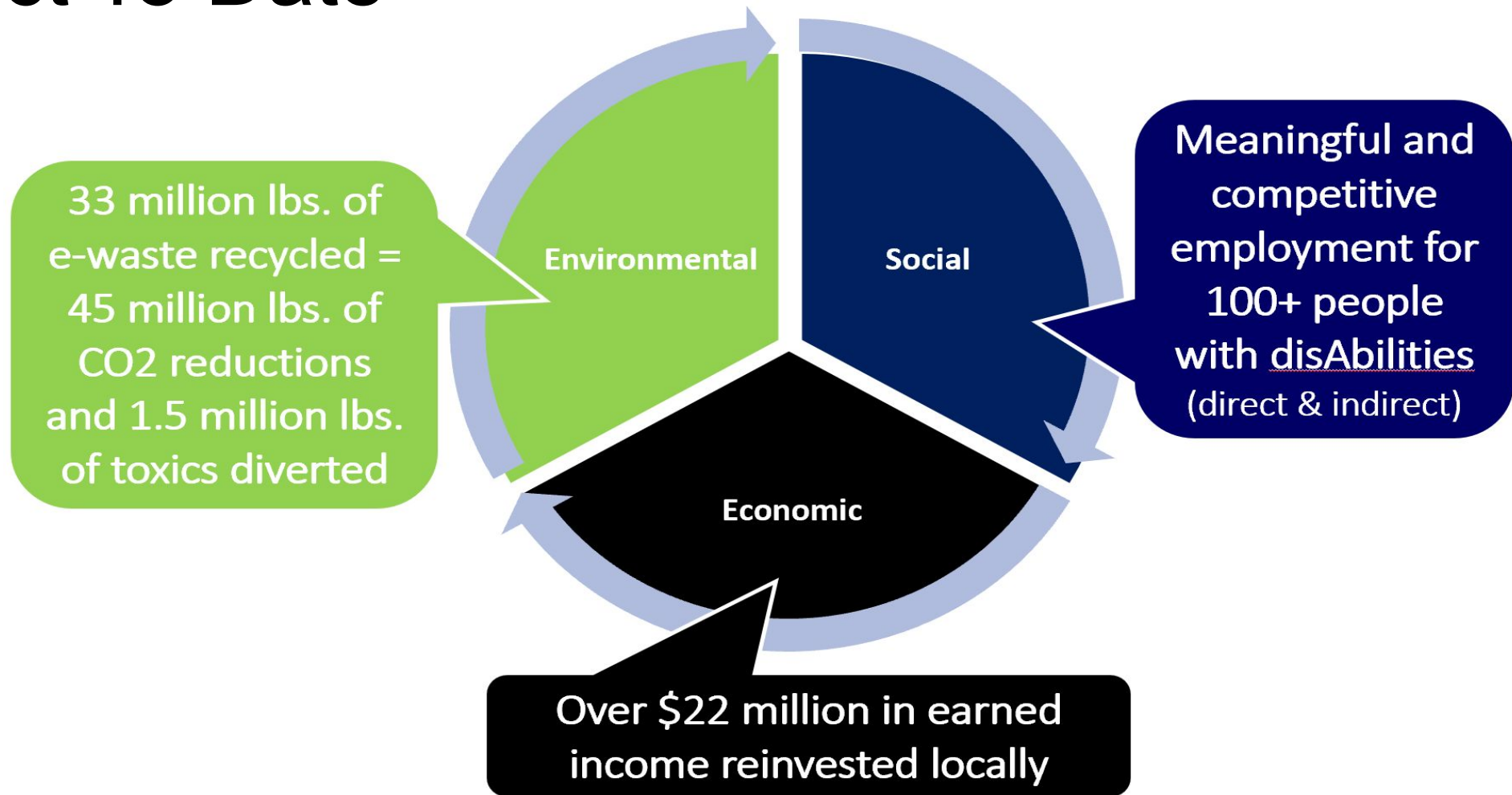
**24-Karat Gold Award Winner 2020**



**COLORADO**  
Environmental Leadership  
Program

Department of Public Health & Environment

# Impact To Date





# Asset-Based Employment

- Working interview to match interest and aptitudes to work tasks
- Systemize and document all work tasks with specific daily goals
- Team membership, contribution, accountability, and recognition



# Meaningful Work. Stellar Workforce.



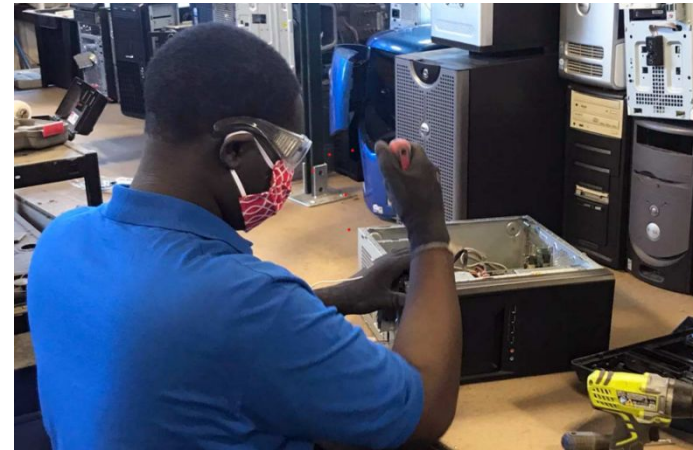
- *Zero absenteeism since 2009*
- *Less than 10% annual turnover*
- *0-1 lost-time accidents per year*
- *5.2 years avg employee tenure*
- *98% task-engaged on-the-clock*

*"If I did not have my work, I would not have my life."*

Temple Grandin

# Actual Workforce Performance (2010-2022)

- *Less than 1% absenteeism*
- *Less than 10% annual turnover*
- *0-1 lost-time accidents annually*
- *98% task-engaged on-the-clock*





# Finding Meaningful Work





# TALL TALES COFFEE COMPANY

Creating and sustaining jobs for people with  
intellectual and developmental disabilities



# WHAT IS TALL TALES RANCH?

Tall Tales Ranch is a local non-profit creating a community in Lone Tree, CO with 28 apartment units, a community event barn, and a coffee shop all designed to provide inclusive housing, meaningful employment, and enriching social opportunities for individuals with I/DD.

## The Tall Tales Ranch vision:

- Quality, sustainable, safe, dignified housing/living environment
- Meaningful work opportunities
- Opportunities for social engagement and establishment of enriching relationships





# THE NEED:

The US is facing a historic labor shortage. Many employers are looking for new ways to attract and retain talent. Yet even in this tight labor market, there is a group that is chronically underemployed despite being ready and willing to work: people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



- Only 36% of people with IDD are in paid employment
- 82% of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are unemployed or underemployed
- Young adults with IDD often stagnate after finishing special education transition programs due to lack of challenging, progressive, integrated, and supportive work and social opportunities.





# Tall Tales Coffee Company

- Launched in early 2022, we now provide employment to 20 individuals with I/DD through our mobile coffee trailer, catering program, and coffee sales.
- We provide hands-on job training and support with one-to-one tailored job coaching.
- Employees are paid a competitive hourly wage.
- We have had a 100% retention rate of employees.
- This year, we have increased employment opportunities by 25%. However, we still have a long waitlist of individuals seeking employment.



# SUCCESS STORIES & METRICS

“Leila’s participation with Tall Tales Ranch has added a new dimension to her life. She has found a community that allows her to celebrate her differences and embrace her abilities. The Tall Tales Coffee Company program is providing her with skills that will serve her for employment and more importantly everyday interactions with people from all backgrounds and abilities. Thank you, Tall Tales, for all that you are doing.”  
–Elena C., the mother of employee Leila L.

## **PARTICIPANTS HAVE SAID THAT THEY...**

- Feel an increase in life purpose when they have a job
- Feel valued and have an increase in self worth
- Feel less isolated socially
- Decrease in stress and anxiety
- Feel that they have gained a support network

"At Tall Tales Coffee Company, people understand my needs. I hope the community can see how capable we are and I hope that we get more opportunities to employ me in the future." – Stephanie S., Tall Tales Coffee Co. employee

**100%**

of our employees and their caregivers noted that participation in this program has increased their quality of life and increased their independence.



# NEXT PHASE



We are excited to begin building our community in Lone Tree, CO. The first phase includes the building of our apartment units and community resource center which will serve as the cornerstone for our comprehensive workforce development programs, including:

- Tall Tales Coffee Company: Hands-on job training in a real-world setting
- Prevocational training: Resume building, interview prep, and job readiness
- Workforce connections: Partnering with local employers and offering personalized job coaching
- Life skills training: Promoting healthy living and independence

This center will prepare adults with I/DD for meaningful employment and address the gap in vocational opportunities.



# TALL TALES COFFEE COMPANY



The Tall Tales coffee trailer is just the beginning! This program is a bridge to what will eventually be the Tall Tales Coffee Company coffee shop in Lone Tree.



Housed in the TTR Community Event barn, the coffee shop will provide vocational training and earned wages for people with IDD. Individuals may remain employed at the coffee company or use their newly learned skills to move on to other local employment with the support of TTR job coaches.