

Eric: Hello, and welcome to this episode of the "Discover OV" podcast. My name is Eric, and I'm going to be your host as we discover all there is to do in Ocean View. In today's episode of our podcast, we're going to listen in together on a conversation that I got to have with Jessica from Didlake. Now, if you don't know who Didlake is or what they do, you're about to discover an amazing organization doing a whole lot of good for people with disabilities in our community. But before we get into that, I want to invite you to subscribe to the podcast here.

In addition to this amazing episode, we've got other amazing episodes coming up where, for example, we're going to be talking to the owner of a World of Good, a favorite restaurant of locals and tourists alike here in Ocean View. We're going to have a conversation coming up after that with Meryl Ann Butler, the owner and art instructor at Ocean View Arts, as well as hearing from others who like you and I love living in or visiting Ocean View.

And so, with that, thanks again for listening today. And why don't we go ahead and jump into the conversation that I got to have with Jessica? All right. Well, like I said, today, I'm so excited to have a conversation with Jessica. Hi, Jessica.

Jessica: Hey, how are you, Eric?

Eric: I'm doing good. I'm really looking forward to this for several reasons. One, I want to learn more about Didlake, and two, I'm excited to learn more about you and connect with another OVBA business person in the area. So, that's always fun.

Jessica: Yeah. Well, I'm excited to share and kind of just give more information about Didlake and continue to, like you said, kind of network with more of OVBA members.

Eric: Great. Well, we're going to talk a little bit about Ocean View as well, because we love this area and we like to share about it and talk about fun things to do and stuff, but before we get into that real quickly, I know I lived here for a couple of years before I was aware of Didlake, and, you know, I think that's probably a lot of folks. And so, why don't you take just a moment and kind of introduce us to Didlake, what is it, what do you do? Tell us a little bit.

Jessica: Yeah. So, my name's Jessica Klein, I'm the program manager with Didlake. I've been the program manager for two years now. Previously, was a job coach and then made the transition to program manager. Didlake is a non-profit organization who works with students and adults with significant disabilities to explore and obtain competitive employment. And competitive employment, meaning that it's integrated amongst others without disabilities and they're making at least minimum wage or above. Didlake has supported over 1,800 individuals with significant disabilities within the past 10 years. And

our job coaches who work in the Hampton Roads area have helped them to obtain those employment opportunities in the community.

Eric: Okay. So, Didlake covers the Hampton Roads area?

Jessica: Yep. So, our main central office is in Manassas, but we have grown since then. And so, now we are in the Hampton Roads area. So, we have job coaches as far as the Eastern Shore to Norfolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, all those areas. We have seven job coaches who are just kind of running and going in and helping every which person they can that gets referred to us to work in the community.

Eric: Okay. And you're in the Ocean View office though?

Jessica: Correct. Yep. So, I'm right off of Shore Drive. We're right next to where people...I feel like the landmark Captain Groovy's, probably a good landmark. So, our building is right next to them. So, we'll sneak over for lunch every now and then.

Eric: Nice. Nice. Now, when you say persons with significant disability, I think significant was the word you used?

Jessica: Correct.

Eric: What does that mean, significant?

Jessica: So, it's going to be an individual who is going to have limiting factors, so things that are going to impact work and that's going to be deemed by DARS. So, it could be two or three significant limitations. So, we see a variety of individuals. So, it could be someone that has a physical disability, intellectual developmental across the board. So, that's going to go through our...they're not our partner, but we are a vendor to DARS and they refer individuals to us. So, they do those assessments and then refer them to us.

Eric: Okay. What's DARSs?

Jessica: Yep. Sorry. Gosh, I'm just huge on acronyms. So, I throw out an acronym, and you gotta catch me Eric. So, DARS is our Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, so each area has their own. So, there's an office here in Portsmouth and then you have one in Newport News area, and then you have one in like the Norfolk area. So, that's the link to get supportive employment. And that's kind of like our title. So, when you think about the service that the job coaches provide to an individual, it's called supportive employment. So, we support them in their needs and their area. So, it's very individualized as well.

So, sometimes people ask like, "Oh, are you a recruiter?" We're not recruiter. We're not just pumping out people. You know, we're really trying to find good matches with companies in the community looking to place them with people that fit their business needs and then also matching the strengths of the individuals that we're working with. So, you know, it's not just a let's sit down and apply on Indeed. Our job coaches are going out and talking to businesses and talking about what supportive appointment looks like. Do we know about reasonable accommodations for people? And then what it would look like to work with a job coach and what supports they can provide to an employer.

Eric: Okay. Great. Well, so our podcast audience, those that are listening to this, we get people that listen to this that are employers in the area, you know, through the OVBA and beyond. We have people that are residents of the area just listening and learning more about Ocean View, as well as tourists, you know, coming into the area. So, I want to try to take a second to talk to a little bit of all of them, and I think first for those that are business owners that may be thinking, wow, I had no idea this was here or anything like that. Like, what would somebody do if they were a business owner and wanted to get connected with you?

Jessica: Yeah. Great question, Eric. So, first thing could be to reach out to myself. Just introduce like some people already have in Ocean View Business Association, which has been awesome, and just saying, "Hey, I am interested in learning more." And then what that next step really would look like is me asking if I could come to your business and learn what your business looks like, what are your job needs? What does that look like, the environment? Because sometimes employers may not think they have a need for anything until we maybe dive in a little more and I can see piles of paper stacking up or things like that. And I'm looking around and I say, "Well, who does that? You know, and who does that?" And they're like, "Oh, one person."

And then I could say, well, have we ever thought about maybe carving out something where I have someone who loves routine work, they would be great for your business. And then you can focus more on that customer service or those main job duties that, you know, you wish you had more time spend on. So, really, it's me being able to get out there to your business, to see it, talk more, and really having them tell me what their business is like. And then me being able to bring that back to my team to say, hey, this is the business needs of X, Y, and Z. Do we have any individuals who could be a good fit for that?

If so, then we could potentially do an assessment there, which assessment would just be practicing the work that they could potentially be doing or a working interview. Again, just kind of wordsmithing the words, but depending on the service that we have them in, they would either be doing assessments at

the site. And that would give the employer the opportunity to see this individual working and see if it could be a good fit for them. If not, no harm, no foul, the individual got to experience and learn more about a job. And then the job coach who is there providing support gets to learn more if this is something of an area of interest for the individual and if it could be a good fit, maybe transitioning to a separate employer who maybe is hiring at the moment. So, there's different ways that we can connect, but the biggest is doing assessments and working interviews.

Eric: Okay. Great. I ran a summer camp for 15 years in Ohio. And every summer, we hired, you know, different 100 staff or so, and we had a similar organization we worked with. And I tell you, I mean, we had staff, you know, from any given summer through our partnership with this organization, you know, some summers it would be, you know, just in the kitchen, you know, a lot of food service work, beyond maintenance some years, you know, helping with the maintenance crew, painting. I mean, everybody that came and worked with us through the partnership had a variety of abilities just like all of the staff we hired that weren't people with disabilities. And so, it was great. We had office, you know, administration help, and it was just fantastic. So, is that same kind of thing? Like, I think a lot of people may hear this and they get a preconceived idea of dishwasher is what you're looking for, something like that. But you said, you're going to places and seeing papers and stuff. So, like, people just don't know, in other words.

Jessica: Yeah. You don't know what you don't know, and I think or I know a huge part of why I love what I do is to be able to go out and educate and inform the community of very underserved population who deserve an opportunity like anyone else, but because they are maybe labeled and needing support. I mean, we all need supports in some way. I wish I had a job coach sometimes. You know, and so, to your point, breaking those barriers with employers and letting them know people can do a lot more if you allow them to grow. You know, not to open the whole nother kind of can of worms, we have a project. It's national program called Project SEARCH over in Maryview Hospital out in Portsmouth, and what that consists of is like a training program for students. And we try to get into different departments within our host business.

And I remember one specific example where the security department had, I mean, years and years of like just data that they needed to consolidate and enter. And they finally broke their barrier to allow us to have an intern in there. I mean, they wanted to hire him afterwards. They were like, "Please, keep him." I mean, he cleared through those years of data. I mean, he was so focused and, you know, they truly could see that he was more capable of doing things once they gave him the opportunity. And then that's where we just need to get in. We need to get in and allow people to see that these individuals can flourish.

But just like anyone else, you know, some jobs just aren't a great fit for us and maybe that doesn't work out and we move on just like anyone else. You know, a company hires, you know, let's just say Joe, and Joe doesn't work out. You know, I've had an employer ask me or tell me before, 'Oh, I'm sorry, we've had someone with a disability before.' And I said, "Well, what did you do when another employee got fired?" And they said, "We just hired another one." I said, "Well, you do the same thing." You know, everyone has their own personality, their own niche. I mean, they are people just like we are their own personalities and, you know, we need to be open to change, and that's what Didlake does in our community. And, you know, I'm really excited to had gotten included in the Ocean View Business Association to be able to connect with businesses that are in our backyard, that are right next door that I eat at, you know, to help educate. And hopefully, you know, at the end of the day, maybe you can find employment and having people working in our community and having it look different and that being okay.

Eric: Yeah. No. Absolutely. Absolutely. So, for those that are listening to the podcast that are residents of the area and, you know, they may be listening and maybe they have a child, a student age- or even an adult child, I'm assuming the same kind of thing, would they start with you or do they need to start with DARS?

Jessica: They would need to start with DARS. So, locating the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Service in your area. There are other vendors in the area, I'm going to be biased and say that we're the best though in what we do. And so, the first step would be going to DARS and kind of going through that process. I say the earlier the better, a lot of families are waiting until later. And so, the earlier the better get in. And then if you're familiar, I mean, families are always welcome to refer or recommend say that I want to go with Didlake services or if they want to know more, they're always welcome to call me and I can explain to them what services would look like. Because with supportive employment, we then also need to fade out, so it's not a one-on-one service for life. These individuals, we set up natural supports and accommodations in that workplace. And so, we just really, you know, want to make sure that people, if they're going with supportive employment, it's the best fit for them because everyone who was working, we just need to figure out what does that look like.

Eric: Yeah. This isn't a workshop environment where you've got trained professionals there every shift working, you know, one-on-one, one on two, this is in place employment. You're there to help get things started and in place and overcome barriers as I'm sure, but your goal is to eventually be able to move on to assist the next person while that person stays employed. Would that be right?

Jessica: Correct. Yep. Our job coaches have a caseload anywhere between 30 to potentially 50 clients who are either stable on the job and they do check-ins with or they're actively searching for employment for them or they're training them on the job. And like you said, the end goal is to be able to fade, but whoever they get employed by, they're employees of that business. So, a local Food Lion, a warehouse, they're their employees, not a Didlake employee. We just work for them and help support them.

Eric: Okay. That's great. That's great. Okay. Now, next question is, and I apologize, I'm going to put you on the spot with this one. I sent you a list of questions ahead of time. So, if we need to edit this one out, we totally can because this is not in the list of questions, but it just came to me. So, for those that are listening that are tourist getting ready to travel in the area or in the area, is there a list of businesses that have hired, and like, if somebody wants to support a local restaurant that, you know, is socially conscious and aware and engaged in this area of social justice, do you guys have a list of businesses you work with that somebody could go look at?

Jessica: So, our website does have a list. I don't believe it's open to the public. It may be an internal. So, I had to check, but, you know, really, I think if you go into a lot of businesses, you'll find that it's starting to look different and different is good. You know, and I think or I know since joining Ocean View Business Association, I've been able to connect with so many more businesses and our job coaches are great with kind of connecting with each other on employment opportunities. We just had Applebee's hire six individuals. You know, so there's companies out there. And so, I think, you know, by getting on here and kind of continuing to build on that platform is something that we're continuing to work on.

Eric: Okay. Great. Well, the other couple of questions we're gonna have, we're gonna shift gears, but before we shift gears and talk about Ocean View itself, let me just ask you this real quick. Was there anything else that you were wanting to make sure you got in or got to share about, you know, Didlake, your services, your clients, anything like that?

Jessica: I think just being open. You know, really some of this can be new to businesses and to people, you know, I want to make sure that our resources get out there to the community because I don't think enough families are aware of what are the next steps for, you know, my son or my daughter. And so, knowing your resources in the community and then also just letting businesses know like, hey, I'm out there, Didlake is here, no pressure if you have a job coach that comes into your business, hopefully, you accept them with open arms to just hear and learn more about what we do. And then if you're listening, then feel

free to give me a call and we can have a chat and talk about what your business is about and, you know, how can we help?

Eric: Yeah. No. That's great. And hopefully, you know, with upcoming OVBA meetings or socials, you know, for the ones that, you know, you're there, and like hopefully, other businesses start to recognize you more and those conversations happen and that would be all really great stuff. So, let's say a few minutes to talk about Ocean View. This podcast is called "Discover OV." And it's geared again towards, you know, the residents and wonderful people that love to come in vacation here because they realized that we live in a pretty amazing place. So, one of the questions I wanted to ask you was if you had to add one thing, keep one thing, and get rid of one thing in Ocean View, what would those be?

Jessica: All right. So, all great questions. And the thing that I was excited about jumping on the podcast and being a member and I've told this to my company as well is that I kind of get the benefit of mixing business with pleasure because I [inaudible 00:21:20] my company here, but I also live here. So, I have a little bias. So, some of my answers, they may not be extremely work-oriented, which I think...

Eric: That's okay.

Jessica: So, for the add, it definitely was a selfish add because I live within walking distance to a beach access. And I would love if the corner lot that is trying to go up in the making could be a bagel or sandwich shop because I know that they would take so much of my money, whether I was going to work or walking to or from the beach. I just think that it would be amazing and great spot to put a little bagel sandwich shop at the end of my street. So, if anyone not [inaudible 00:22:15] my address, but Chesapeake Street, if any businesses are listening and they want to open up a bagel shop, I will be your number one customer.

Eric: That's great. I often...so same thing, but a different beach access. We just walked down, you know, to it last night to go for a walk, you know, on the beach with the kids and stuff, and I wish each of the beach access points had a bike rack right there, you know, because there's not. And the bikes, you know, you have to take them clear out to the end or leave it at the front and chain them all...anyway, that's my... I think to the beach access points all have places have potential for development.

Jessica: Yeah. Yeah. I didn't even think about that just because I do walk, but a bike acts like, you know, having that would be great because I've seen bikes where you're just kind of like dragging them on. So, it created this [inaudible 00:23:11], like dragging it through the sand with your bag.

Eric: Yeah. Cool. So, in a nice bagel sandwich shop, I like it. What if there was one thing you wanted to keep?

Jessica: Gosh, I know that this probably is like super common amongst most people that you might talk to in Ocean View, but like really keeping the actual ocean views. I know that's a big thing. But I think the coolest part about when I bought my house was that I could tell people, "Hey, when I drive down to the end of my street, I can see the ocean." How cool is that? So, I think being able to keep some of that ocean actual view would be amazing.

Eric: No, I agree. I agree. How about get rid of, anything you want to get rid of?

Jessica: So, mine is not a physical thing, but I would really like to get rid of the perception that people have of Ocean View because I did not grow up in this area and I used to live in Virginia Beach. And so, before kind of work, you know, we just kind of travel and I got to explore Ocean View and I said, "Oh, I'm gonna buy a house in Ocean View." Everyone's like, "Ooh, I don't know about that." And, you know, so I would like to get rid of that. And I loved seeing kind of like, you know, the logo that they have around, you know, the Old Salt, New Vibe. And I think that's a big part of what the Ocean View Business Association is kind of bringing that together and it's been really fun to be able to go to Captain Groovy's or go somewhere and say, "Oh, I know that owner, I know this person," or, "Hey, I'm going to go into the shop. I'm going to go get my hair cut by Sue." You know, and so, I think that the more that this association can push out good news and me running my mouth because I'm a talker, so as soon as someone says something about ocean view, I'm like, "Look, I can't tell you what it was like 10 years ago, but I can tell you what it's like now. And it's really awesome. It's a cool spot. And if you don't get in now, you're missing out."

Eric: You're going to miss out. No, I completely agree. We moved from Ohio to Virginia Beach and '16, and then in '17, it was '17, I think, we decided to move to Ocean View. And I didn't have any backstory or anything like that as a new person in the area but as we told people that's where we're moving to, we got a lot of like, really, like is that really. And I'm like, "I don't know, we liked it a lot."

Jessica: "Are you sure?"

Eric: Yeah. I'm like, "I don't get it." We're thrilled we moved here. All right. Cool. So, if you were on vacation in OV, we're getting more and more vacations, especially with Airbnbs and all of that, which is fantastic. I love it personally. I have no problem with it. If you're on vacation in OV, what's the one place you would be glad you had visited?

Jessica: So, I mean the beach is a no-brainer, so we'll just knock that one off. And then my second one, I'm a foodie. So, if you have not tried out a World of Good again, I can walk there, it's dangerous, it is amazing. So, don't leave Ocean View without diving into everything on their menu.

Eric: I've got to get over there. That's one place I have not been in yet. And I keep hearing over and over about a World of Good. And they're a new member to the OVBA and...

Jessica: Yeah. Well, Eric, I don't know what you're doing this afternoon, but you might need to get over there, sit on their patio. You would think I was like, you know, their [inaudible 00:27:09], they have Tuesday night burger nights.

Eric: Oh yeah. Okay. That's fun.

Jessica: Yeah. It's like their burger and whiskey sour on Tuesday special. I mean, people are friendly, great place. We're really lucky to have it right in our backyard.

Eric: That's cool. No, I have to go check it out. With four kids, we don't eat out a whole lot because it's just not worth it. But yeah, no, it's good. We'll definitely check that out. Okay. Cool. So, like, you already mentioned the beach, but, you know, some fun experiences in OV. What have you got? Anything besides the beach or you're just like the beach makes it?

Jessica: Gosh, I mean, obviously, like, you know, places, restaurants, breweries.

Eric: Yeah. We've got a couple of great breweries. Yeah.

Jessica: I do like the breweries. I know it sounds cheesy, but really the Ocean View Business Association, I know tourists can't like come and do that, but it just has been such a great experience. And I know I like to harp on that, but I've been in for about a year, probably, I think our anniversary was like coming up. I probably get [inaudible 00:28:25] a reminder for some dues or something. So, you know, just to learn more and get that friendly vibe, so I think if you haven't checked out some of like the local Hole In The Wall, World of Good, Ocean View Diner, the beaches, those are where I spend a lot of my time. I am a little biased also. I do CrossFit. So, Cory may be mad at me for saying this, but I do go to CrossFit Rise. So, I'm not at his gym. So, you know, that's a great place to kind of just let free and Cory's gym is awesome too. So, CrossFit, if you're in the area, checking out that gym, they'll, you know, welcome you with open arms. So, I think trying out any, you know, especially CrossFit Little Creek, that experience, I don't think you'll regret it. Get a good sweat. You might be sore the next day, but just seeing that.

Eric: That's okay. Yeah. No, that's good. That's good. No, we have a lot of great places and, you know, like I said, I got to get to a World of Good. That's always good. We like to go and eat on the top of the pier.

Jessica: You know what? That's a good one. I missed that. You know, my husband and I will ride our bike and we've gone there and sat up on the rooftop and the new paint job looks awesome. So, I don't know how I forgot about that one. That's a good one.

Eric: Yeah. No, that's okay. No, it's a very unique place to go eat.

Jessica: Yeah. Did you know that it's the longest pier on...?

Eric: On East Coast?

Jessica: Yeah. I didn't [inaudible 00:30:09] until we were like, I bought a shirt because I was cold one day and my husband's reading it and was like no way. And then he goes and Googles it and we're like, "This is cool."

Eric: Yeah. Yeah. It's one of the places we like to take... So, it's interesting, when we lived in Ohio, we never had people that wanted to come and spend a week at our house. Never. We moved here and now we have all kinds of people that are, you know, dropping hints about coming and vacationing at our house. And it's great. We love it. We love the family, we have an extra bedroom specifically for that so we can host family and stuff like that. But that's one of the top places to take people to eat because they just don't get that experience. And I do a lot of fishing and I've been to a lot of piers. It's a very unique experience.

Jessica: Yeah. And I think when you're talking about experiences too, the other thing that I like about the area is stay in an Airbnb, you will not regret it. Don't go to a hotel and...I mean, stay in an Airbnb. They're awesome. They're great. And you probably are going to find one right on the water. So. I've loved the Airbnbs as well.

Eric: Yeah. All right. Well, hey, thank you so much for sharing about both Didlake and about Ocean View. So, thanks for being on the podcast today.

Jessica: Yeah. Thanks, Eric.

Eric: Well, friend, thanks again for listening to this episode of the "Discover OV" podcast. We would love to hear from you who would you like to hear from on the podcast? And if you're a local business owner, please consider joining the Ocean View Business Association. It's the only requirement to be a business guest on the podcast here for "Discover OV." You can learn more about this, find a listing to our member directory, and so much more by heading over to oceanview.biz. Thanks a lot. Have a great day.

