

Placerville business takes chance on hiring autistic adults

By Sammy Caiola, Sacramento Bee

On the sun-soaked patio of Placerville's Lava Cap Winery, Richard eyed the case of empty blue bottles he was picking up from wine club manager Kevin Jones. Without any prompting, Richard launched into a lecture as he worked.

"The blue comes from cobalt and nickel, the green from copper oxide," said the eager 29-year-old about the bottles in Jones' arms. "Red glass you don't see very much because it's made from gold."

He would have gone on had his mother not gently reminded him it was time to load the bottles into the car. Like many adults on the autism spectrum, Richard has an uncanny knack for memorizing details, but doesn't always choose the best moments to share them.

Richard now has a safe place to practice those skills while working for Forever Glass, a young Placerville company that makes and sells glass bowls from recycled wine bottles. His mother, Cathy Porter, who launched the business last year to hire adults with developmental disabilities, said Richard and others like him can become valuable employees, with the right support. The Bee is only using Richard's first name at the request of his mother.

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