



Media Release

Oct 9 2017

Innovative new employment programme for adults with Down syndrome launched

Beauty in All its Forms is a joint initiative by Down Syndrome Ireland and leading professional haircare brand ALFAPARF Milano

An innovative new national employment programme for adults with Down syndrome has been launched by Down Syndrome Ireland and Ireland's largest professional haircare brand, ALFAPARF Milano.

In what is the first of its kind in the country, the 'Beauty in all its Forms' programme gives adults with Down syndrome the opportunity to train as hairdressing assistants with a view to securing long-term employment.

The programme was piloted by Down Syndrome Ireland in conjunction with ALFAPARF Milano in early 2017, with six candidates, and had an almost 70% success rate of people securing employment following training.

After the successful pilot programme, Down Syndrome Ireland and ALFAPARF Milano are now launching the programme in selected ALFAPARF Milano salons nationally, with a further six adults with Down syndrome.

John Mulligan from Kilmacow in Waterford is one of the participants who secured employment following the 4-month pilot training scheme. He said: "The training was great. I learned lots, how to fold towels, cleaning and washing hair. Getting a job in Lloyds made me happy and confident.

"It makes me normal."

His mother Margaret Mulligan added: "I've seen his confidence and independence grow since beginning the programme, meeting people and being in the work environment. I hope this programme shows that with proper training, people with Down syndrome can gain employment.

"John being offered a position at Lloyds Hair Salon has been the icing on the cake. It has been a life changing experience."

Gary Owens, CEO of Down Syndrome Ireland, welcomed the partnership with ALFAPARF Milano, adding that working alongside a person with Down syndrome often enriches the wider workforce and benefits a company in many diverse and unique ways.

“People with disabilities tend to have better attendance records than non-disabled people. Likewise, companies report reduced absentee levels and increased productivity across the whole organisation following the employment of an individual with a disability.

“One of our key goals in Down Syndrome Ireland is to provide people with Down syndrome with a high degree of independence in adulthood. We are making real progress in developing our adult education programmes and establishing partnerships with companies such as ALFAPARF Milano to support us.

“We are thrilled to be working with ALFAPARF Milano and we welcome many more years of a successful partnership to ensure adults with Down syndrome have access to socially valuable roles in the workforce.”

David Donnellan, Managing Director of ALFAPARF Milano said: “As Ireland’s leading brand of professional haircare, our objective is to make our customers look and feel more beautiful, everyday. We recognise that beauty comes in many forms however, and it is this promotion of diversity and inclusion that lies at the heart of this initiative.

“We are delighted to be involved with Down Syndrome Ireland, and would like to thank all of our participating salons, without whose support this programme would not be possible.”

ENDS

Beauty in All its Forms

Alfaparf Milano originally began the programme in 2013 in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, and is now active in Guatemala and Italy. Since it began, the programme has delivered training to 91 people with intellectual disability, of which 22 are now working in Salons in Brazil.

The pilot programme in Ireland began in early 2017, with six candidates, four of whom went on to secure work following completion of their in-salon placement, which the candidates undertake on completion of their training.

The programme comprises of 16 weeks of training and education, delivered jointly by ALFAPARF Milano and Down Syndrome Ireland. The first 8 weeks mainly take place in the ALFAPARF Milano Academy in Dublin, where participants learn about hair salons, how they work, and different roles within the salon and how ALFAPARF Milano professional hair products are used.

In addition, they learn how to greet clients, fold towels, sterilize hairbrushes, wash a client’s hair, and the basic cleaning tasks normally associated with a Hairdresser Assistant’s role.

The following four weeks take place in partner salons, when the students have the opportunity to put their classroom-based learning into practice. At the end of the placement, the student sits a

practical exam to assess their level of acquired knowledge. Successful candidates are awarded with an ALFAPARF Milano Certified Hairdressing Assistant award, a qualification which demonstrates that they have the requisite skills to be considered for a Hairdressing Assistant's role.

About ALFAPARF Milano

ALFAPARF Milano is a leading Italian multinational manufacturer of professional, exclusive hair colour, hair care and styling products. In Ireland, ALFAPARF Milano is the largest professional haircare brand in Ireland. It delivers exclusive products to over 1,200 partner salons across the country.