



# A True 'Job' Shop

Lapeer Plating and Plastics Breaking Barriers with Mental Health Partners

**BY TIM PENNINGTON**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**B**eing a good corporate citizen can also have rewards for the company, as Lapeer Plating and Plastics has found out.

A manufacturer and electroplater of Class A, high-visibility automotive components, the Michigan company found itself, like most companies, with a need to hire more employees after the pandemic.

So when the local Lapeer County Community Mental Health approached them two years ago about partnering on employment opportunities for some of its clients, Lapeer Plating and Plastics jumped at the opportunity.

### Breaking Down Barriers

“We’ve worked with community organizations in the past, and we try to be positive corporate citizens,” says Joe Du Breuil, Human Resources Administrator at Lapeer Plating and Plastics.

“We’ve worked with Goodwill, Job Corps, and Michigan Works in the local area, and we’ve worked with a couple of the local colleges to bring on students,” he says. “The County Community Mental Health program was reaching out to employers and were looking for additional partnerships.”



**Joe Du Breuil**

LPPs began their partnership by hiring clients from CMH’s IPS Program, IPS or Individual Placement and Support is a model of supported employment for people with serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia spectrum disorder, bipolar, and depression). IPS-supported employment helps people living with behavioral health conditions work at regular jobs of their choosing.

“The thing that sets Lapeer Plating and Plastics apart is their commitment to providing support and coaching to the individuals to focus on overcoming barriers that have otherwise proved to be detrimental to their success with a different employer,” says

Kelly Turner, Employment Specialist for the IPS Program at Lapeer Community Mental Health.

“They have allowed us to come in and be a part of the success, provide job coaching or additional training when needed, anything that they are able to do, they have done,” Turner says. “This has been one of the easiest partnerships I have had with an employer in my community. Joe has been very easy to work with, and the company itself has leaned its values toward ‘second chance employment’ and giving back to the community of Lapeer.

### Making Accommodations Work

The first accommodation they looked at was making the schedule more flexible.

“That’s because many of CMH’s clients could only work certain hours,” Du Breuil says. “Otherwise, it would conflict with the benefits they were receiving and the programs they were attending.”



**Location:** Lapeer, MI

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Lapeer Plating and Plastics, though, was glad to work with CMH and its clients to find spots for them as they could offer part-time and limited-hour work programs where the employees

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would focus on specific tasks.

Du Breuil says the partnership with IPS was doing so well that LPP and CMH leaders decided to expand their program to include its Harmony Hall Clubhouse Program as well. Harmony Hall Clubhouse offers people living with mental illness opportunities for friendship, employment, housing, education, and access to medical and psychiatric services in a single, caring, and safe environment.

Harmony Hall recently honored LPP for its efforts to integrate individuals with mental illness into its workforce.

### **Provide Job Opportunities, Promote Inclusivity, Reduce Stigma**

LPP has had over 22 employees working for them through various CMH programs.

“The aim of this employment partnership is not only to provide job opportunities but also to promote inclusivity and reduce the stigma against individuals facing mental health challenges,” says Kevin Mountz, Director of Employment Services at Lapeer CMH.

By actively involving these employees in a structured work environment — and by offering job opportunities to individuals facing mental health challenges — Mountz says Lapeer Plating and Plastics takes a stand against the negative stereotypes that often hinder their inclusion in certain workplaces.

“This partnership not only provides a means for livelihood but also creates an environment where all workers feel valued and respected,” he says.



“The success of this initiative can be attributed to the strong collaboration between Lapeer Plating and Plastics, Harmony Hall, and Lapeer County Community Mental Health. Their unified effort ensures that everyone involved benefits from this partnership: the employees themselves as well as the company itself.”

### **Benefiting from Community Partnerships**

Du Breuil says that LPP has definitely benefited from the partnership.

“They approached me first, and I didn’t know how well it would work because we only offered full-time,” he says. “And then right after Covid, we were having trouble recruiting, and





we took a serious look at maybe offering part-time and customized hours. And from there, it really flourished.

LPP had some experience in the past

working with organizations where its clients had barriers to full-time employment. Du Breuil and his team brought a few of those employees on

to sort and inspect parts, and they quickly saw the benefit of such a program.

With the employees from CMH, LPP

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implemented some modifications to several of LPP work cells to accommodate individuals who needed assistance. Most of the individuals in the IPS program are able to maintain full or part-time employment at normal workstations because of the support that they are being offered and because of LPP's continued dedication to ensuring that they are getting the support they need to flourish.

"These are people who have emotional barriers or circumstances in their lives that would normally interfere with employment," Du Breuil says. "These modifications provide an environment that was set up to raise confidence and productivity.

The modifications weren't that significant.

"We do that with all incoming team members, and there really isn't too much difference," he says. "It's looking at an individual's skill set and strengths and figuring out where they would be successful."



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### Finding a Right Fit for Employees

LPP has three distinct departments within its facility: injection molding, chrome plating, and assembly and paint.

“Each one of our operations is completely different from the other,” Du Breuil says. “So if an individual has better luck in one area, they may not have that same luck in another area. Or they may do well in one area that they didn’t do well in a different area. A big part of the success is tailoring down our program to them.”

Some of the CMH clients had never worked in an environment such as what LPP does. Currently, the facility has 14 CMH clients working for them.

“Through CMH Programs, we have been able to hire 21 people with various struggles keeping and maintaining competitive employment,” Turner says. “14 of these are still employed, and most of them have been employed for more than 90 days.”

“They are all interested in giving it a shot,” Du Breuil says. “Some have worked in other areas like food service



Harmony Hall recently honored LPP for its efforts to integrate individuals with mental illness into its workforce.

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or janitorial, and they are looking for something different and want to try it. A few are experienced in manufacturing and kind of move from facility to facility. Some programs are trying to find employment where we'll actually hire them. And in some other programs, the work is temporary. Some come in, and they work for a year, and then they'll get placed with another employer, while others stay on permanently."

Shaun Ryan, LPP's Operations Manager, says the worker's attitude and charisma are a joy to work with each day/

"You can tell they really appreciate being here," Ryan says. "They are always smiling, willing to learn and meet or exceed goals, and they want to better themselves and learn as much as possible."

LPP also works closely with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), which has the ability to bring in specialized equipment if needed for an employee or even bring in a job coach to learn LPP's processes and then

teach those same processes to incoming individuals. Often, MRS will work in tandem with CMH programs to provide more extensive or long-term accommodations or help fulfill financial needs for someone who needs resources to get started in a new job.

### Case Managers Get Trained on Jobs

In addition, several employment specialists or workers from the clubhouse at Lapeer County Community Mental Health actually get trained on the jobs that their clients may do at LPP so that they can better assist the employees when they are getting trained.

"They know what the jobs are like as well," Du Breuil says. "They are then able to say, 'I think this client will do really well over here.' It helps that they have an intimate knowledge and detail of what we do."

LPP employees and the company management have embraced the program with CMH and other community agencies.

"Our management team is very

excited about our positive community involvement," Du Breuil says. Recently, the company and CMH representatives attended an event in Michigan's state capital, where the company received a Special Tribute award from its state senator and state representative for adopting this program.

Mountz adds that this partnership ensures that these individuals receive the necessary support and resources to thrive in their roles.

"This innovative approach taken by Lapeer Plating and Plastics serves as an example for other companies within the automotive industry and beyond who wish to make positive changes in supporting individuals with mental illness," Mount says. "By breaking down barriers and addressing sensitive issues head-on, this teamwork-oriented project paves the way for greater understanding and acceptance within society as a whole."

"At the end of the day, it's just people helping people, and that should be a factor in anything worth doing," Du Breuil says.



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