



Problem Aspiritech addresses:

For most young people with high functioning autism, the opportunity to find and retain meaningful employment is a nearly impossible goal. Individuals on the spectrum are vastly under-employed, if they are employed at all. While you'd think that close attention to detail, an affinity for logical thinking, strong visual processing and intensity of focus would be desirable attributes, too many companies overlook the strengths of individuals on the autism spectrum.

Even more, for those who do manage to find employment, the challenge of forming social connections with associates often places them in a 'last hired, first fired' category throughout their working lives. These young adults need a chance to use their prodigious talents in meaningful ways. Aspiritech was founded to provide a path for these individuals to realize their potential through gainful employment.

As President Theodore Roosevelt said, "Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

The research: At least 85-90% of all adults with autism are either unemployed or severely underemployed. This includes high functioning adults. Recent research on full time employment rates of 21-25 year olds with different disabilities found that young adults with autism had the lowest rates of full-time employment as compared to individuals with other disabilities; for example, only 20.9% with autism were in full-time employment as compared to 39.7% of individuals with an intellectual disability (Roux et al., 2013). Contrary to popular belief, higher functioning young adults do not fare better than those with lower cognitive abilities. In fact, they are three times more likely to have absolutely no daytime activities at all (Taylor & Seltzer, 2011.)

Aspiritech addresses this problem through:

- **Vocational Training** – teaching job skills that align with the unique capabilities of this population and that harness their strengths (like software testing, data analysis)
- **Providing Employment** – employing them directly in the fields of software testing and quality assurance, as well as aligning the skills they excel in to the needs of the business community
- **Job Coaching** – tools and mentoring that prepare them to be successful in a job environment (both at Aspiritech and in the marketplace beyond)
- **Social Programming** – easing isolation and stress while strengthening social interaction skills (Stepping Up and Out program)
- **Resource and Information services** – providing more than 350 individuals from across the country with resource information each year
- **Sharing of our innovative business model** – directly helping and inspiring companies from across North America and overseas to set up like-minded businesses to accelerate the employment of people with autism in STEM



Our impact:

By focusing on strengths instead of weaknesses, Aspiritech gives adults with autism the opportunity to live meaningful, independent, connected lives while contributing to our society.

Aspiritech statistics:

- 31 employees on the spectrum currently employed (2 full-time salaried)
- 5 former employees have secured jobs in broader marketplace
- Approximately 75 participants monthly in Stepping Up and Out activities
- Our team has successfully worked with more than 40 companies since inception

Testimonial:

"I have Asperger's and ADHD. I am 36 and own a car but still live with my parents. I volunteer at a food pantry, where I do data entry. But it's at Aspiritech, where I'm working part-time, where my pride and gifts truly take flight." Since writing this in a letter to Chicago Magazine, Brian T. has become a full-time, salaried lead tester at Aspiritech, where he manages many projects, supervises others and communicates daily with client companies. He has moved into his own apartment and is in a serious three-year-long relationship.



Why does this matter?

- According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 out of every 68 children has some form of autism
- Each year, 50,000 youth with autism leave high school in the U.S. The legal mandate for help suddenly ends and there is no requirement for providing supportive services in adulthood
- The great majority of adults with autism have disconnected lives, without a job or continued education, isolated from peers
- Each year, Aspiritech nearly doubles the amount of work available to spectrum employees, which means more employment hours and more pay to employees
- Our project managers are almost all on the spectrum – they have gained the skills at Aspiritech to oversee projects, work directly with our clients, and supervise others with autism on their teams

What will my gift do?

While contract services cover the salaries of our test engineers and managers, philanthropy supports our work in the following critical ways:

- Autism specialists who provide:
 - Job coaching
 - Workplace accommodations
 - Counseling and support
- Free vocational training program
- Resource and information services for the broader community
- Social activities through our Stepping Up and Out social enrichment program
- Staff workshops in team building, health and fitness, communication, art therapy, and more

