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FEATURED TOP STORY

EASIER ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, IMPROVED SECURITY AT MDI

By Carrie Manner Staff Writer
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Sarah Mathis, an assembler at MDI in Hibbing, exits her workplace through the recently installed, automatic sliding doors last Friday. Mathis said it's much easier to get in and out of MDI with her walker now that she doesn't have to push the doors open on her own.
Carrie Manner

HIBBING – People who live with a disability and work at Minnesota Diversity Industries will now have an easier time getting in and out of their workplace.

In recent months, new accessible doors were installed at all four of MDI's locations, including the non-profit plastic products supplier's Hibbing facility located off Highway 37, in addition to the ones in Grand Rapids, Cohasset and Minneapolis.

Standing in the local MDI lobby last Friday, operations manager Andrew Tracy told the Hibbing Daily Tribune last week that nearly half of their staff is made up of people with disabilities, so the impact of the entry upgrade was both positive and immediate.

Tracy watched a crowd of employees pour into the hall during their morning break. "It's been great," Tracy said. "It helps them." The newly installed automatic doors opened and closed again behind several workers who rushed outside. One man with a visual impairment trailed behind. He waited to hear the sound of the doors slide open before exiting smoothly with the assistance of his white cane.

The new doors operate on a sensor and are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. They replaced the former swinging doors that resulted in some people needing extra assistance to get in and out of the building. "This change has allowed our facilities to exude the positive, collaborative environments that live beyond our front doors every day," said Peter McDermott, president and CEO of MDI. "From transportation to self-sufficiency at work and home, this is just one more way that we can empower our employees and provide them a space where they can feel pride and purpose as they earn a living for themselves."

The entry updates in Hibbing and Grand Rapids were funded by the nonprofit's new facility and capital upgrade plan. In Cohasset, however, local Jerry Miner donated the funding and in Minneapolis, Schafer Richardson, a property owner and manager with Superior Third Party Logistics and MDI, donated to make the change possible.

The new doors also provide increased safety measures for the Hibbing staff. The visitor doorbell and workforce badge sensor system allows employees easy access while preventing unauthorized entry. It's a change management said was more than welcome.

"It's more secure and easily accessible to our people that need it," Alice Prine, employment support specialist, told the HDT. "We have a lot of folks who can't maneuver or figure out another way to get in or have a hard time with the handles, so it makes it a lot more accessible."

To learn more about MDI, visit www.mdi.org.

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