



POWERS *for* GOOD 2015

POWERS
for
GOOD



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John D'Eri

John D'Eri spent countless hours worrying about what his son Andrew — who has autism — would do when he was no longer there to support him. While Andrew was growing up to become a capable young man, D'Eri knew that there were few opportunities available to him after he aged out of the system at 22.

So D'Eri created an opportunity for his son — and for others with autism, who have difficulty with social interaction and communication.

D'Eri purchased a car wash in Parkland and created a groundbreaking social enterprise called Rising Tide Car Wash, which he founded in November 2012 with his other son, Thomas. Rising Tide opened for business in April 2013.

D'Eri says that those with autism regress if they are not kept occupied. "You have nothing to do, nothing to give you a sense of purpose or achievement," says D'Eri, an entrepreneur who lives in Fort Lauderdale. "So I thought I would buy a business and build something for Andrew."

Now, Rising Tide employs 38 people, 30 of whom have Autism Spectrum Disorder. "The vast majority of the people who work for me wouldn't be able to find employment at all," D'Eri says. "They truly would not have a sustainable job, a job they could build a life with."

He's seen how working can transform the lives of his employees. One was inspired to get his driver's license — after he was told it was impossible. Others want to be independent — to move out of their houses and get their own apartments. "They get a sense of empowerment that expands into other aspects of their lives," D'Eri says. "I have story after story of people being motivated by someone else to try to achieve something."

Now, D'Eri is trying to expand on his concept. He plans to open a second Rising Tide Car Wash in Margate in 2016 — which will employ over 50 people with autism — and hopes to instruct other people in how to create similar enterprises.

"It's important to me to impact as many people as possible," he says. "I feel like it's my responsibility."

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