

VOCATIONS | MACHINE OPERATOR

He Makes Products He Can't See

Jay Browder, 43, is a machine operator at Alphapointe in Kansas City, Mo.

Q. When did you become blind?

A. I lost my sight at 19 when I got shot in the face in a gun accident. I had left high school early to go to work, but losing my vision gave me the motivation to enter a program to get my degree.

I was the only blind student at the school. I needed help with math, but I taped the other classes and studied from the tapes. I was on the bus when I got the call that I'd passed, and I almost got up and ran off I was so happy.

Then I attended a community college and transferred to the University of Detroit Mercy and got a bachelor's in computer information systems.

What's your job?

I run three microinjection molding machines. Two produce plastic barrels and inside parts for the Skilcraft U.S. Government pen, for government personnel, and one produces parts for the Skilcraft B3 Aviator pen, for military pilots. I also run two larger injection molding machines that produce prescription pill bottles for the pharmaceutical industry, and spray bottles.

Whom do you work for?

Alphapointe is a nonprofit associated with the government's AbilityOne program, which creates employment for people who are blind. National Industries for the Blind, a nonprofit designated by AbilityOne to work with it, provides the federal projects I'm involved with. I work primarily for the office products and pharmaceutical products departments here.

How do you operate those machines?

Very carefully. There's a science to it, to keep up with the work and do a good job, especially with no vision. It's mind over matter. I often tell myself: "It's me vs. the machine. Who's going to win?" I have to stay on top of things and make sure I don't make mistakes.

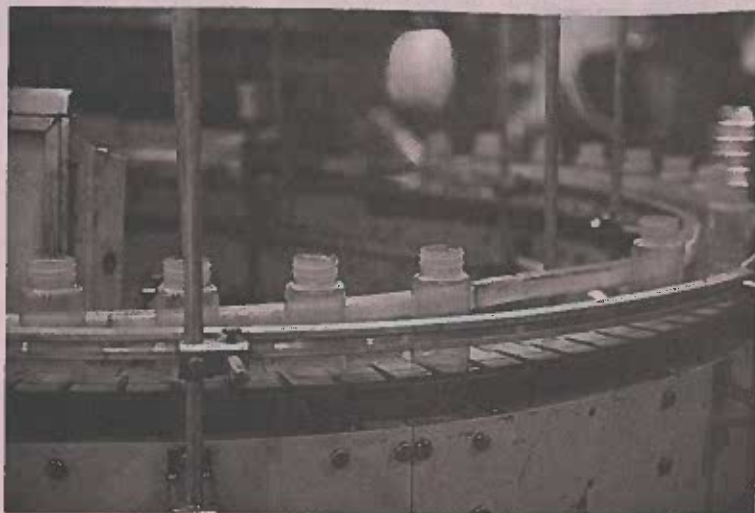
But the machines are also adapted for us. As an example, one machine has a protective case with a handle to open it. Also, I know where the buttons and the tactile labels are, and we follow emergency procedures.

If a pharmaceutical container gets stuck in the machine, rather than try to fix it myself, I sound an alert. Often, the person who

Vocations asks people about their jobs. Interview conducted and condensed by Patricia R. Olsen.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNA PETROW FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



comes to fix it is a blind co-worker who has been trained on jams.

Does the work get tedious?

No, because I'm always asking to learn new machines. I joke that it makes me marketable, but really, I just like to help. The more

Jay Browder works on the factory floor at Alphapointe, which manufactures plastic barrels, medication bottles and parts for pens, among other items.

machines I know, the more the supervisors can move me around. I've also done product assembly and packaging. The veteran workers here have passed on tips like slightly tipping a box to affix a label and then feeling with your fingers to line it up with the edge. I also try to envision what the box looks like.

What is your work background?

I worked at Citibank here in a call center for several years and then was a stay-at-home dad for three years raising my daughter. After that, I found a job in Alphapointe's call center and eventually moved over. I've been with the organization for three years in December.

How do you think of blindness in the workplace?

It's fascinating that my co-workers and I are able to do things like this. Some of my colleagues have been blind their whole life. They've never seen another person or driven a car, but they can do this work and do it well.

It encourages me and motivates me to come in every day and work hard.

DATABANK

POWERED BY THOMSON REUTERS



STOCK MARKET INDEXES

| Index | Close | Wdy Chg | Wdy %Chg | 52-Wk %Chg | YTD %Chg |
|------------------------------------|----------|---------|----------|------------|----------|
| DOW JONES | | | | | |
| Industrials | 26458.31 | -285.19 | -1.07 | +18.09 | + 7.0 |
| Transportation | 11379.36 | -153.20 | -1.33 | +14.78 | + 7.2 |
| Utilities | 720.60 | - 6.56 | -0.90 | - 0.41 | - 0.4 |
| Composite | 8810.24 | -99.57 | -1.12 | +14.25 | + 6.0 |
| 100 Stocks | 1294.27 | - 3.87 | -0.30 | +16.37 | + 9.4 |
| 500 Stocks | 2913.98 | -15.69 | -0.54 | +15.66 | + 9.0 |
| Mid-Cap 400 | 2019.55 | -21.81 | -1.07 | +12.45 | + 8.3 |
| Small-Cap 600 | 1061.92 | -12.43 | -1.16 | +17.47 | +13.4 |
| NASDAQ | | | | | |
| Composite | 8046.35 | + 59.40 | + 0.74 | +23.87 | +16.6 |
| Nasdaq 100 | 7627.65 | + 96.58 | + 1.28 | +27.57 | +19.2 |
| OTHER UNITED STATES INDEXES | | | | | |
| NYSE Comp. | 13082.52 | -153.92 | -1.16 | + 7.15 | + 2.1 |
| American Exch | 2720.26 | +32.51 | +1.21 | + 3.07 | + 2.2 |
| Wilshire 5000 | 30259.82 | -164.18 | -0.54 | +15.35 | + 8.9 |
| Value Line Arith | 6529.21 | -73.24 | -1.11 | +13.00 | + 7.2 |
| Russell 2000 | 1696.57 | -15.74 | -0.92 | +13.80 | +10.5 |
| FOREIGN INDEXES | | | | | |
| Bolaa | 49504.16 | +172.65 | +0.35 | - 1.67 | + 0.3 |
| Bovespa | 79342.42 | -101.87 | -0.13 | + 6.80 | + 1.9 |
| TSXC Comp. | 16073.14 | -150.99 | -0.93 | + 2.80 | - 0.8 |
| FTSE 100 | 7510.20 | + 19.97 | +0.27 | + 1.86 | - 2.3 |
| DAX | 12246.73 | -184.15 | -1.48 | - 4.54 | - 5.2 |
| CAC 40 | 5493.49 | - 0.68 | -0.01 | + 3.07 | + 3.4 |
| Nikkei 225 | 24120.04 | +444.86 | + 1.05 | +18.45 | + 6.0 |
| Hang Seng | 27788.52 | -165.06 | -0.59 | + 0.85 | - 7.1 |
| Shanghai B. | 290.20 | + 1.60 | +0.55 | -19.75 | -15.1 |
| All Ordinaries | 6325.50 | +20.10 | +0.32 | +10.11 | + 2.6 |
| Sensex 30 | 36227.14 | -614.46 | -1.67 | +15.80 | + 6.4 |

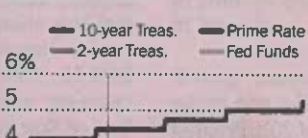
LARGEST STOCKS

| Stock (TICKER) | Low | High | Close | 1-Wk Chg | 1-Wk %Chg | YTD %Chg |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Apple (AAPL) | 150.24 | 229.67 | 225.74 | +8.08 | +3.71 | +33.4 |
| Amazon.com (AMZN) | 950.10 | 2050.50 | 2003.00 | +87.99 | +4.59 | +11.3 |
| Microsoft (MSFT) | 73.31 | 115.29 | 114.37 | +0.11 | +0.10 | +33.7 |
| Facebook (FB) | 149.02 | 218.62 | 184.46 | +1.53 | +0.94 | -6.8 |
| Alphabet (GOOG) | 940.55 | 1273.89 | 1193.47 | +27.38 | +2.35 | N.A. |
| Alphabet (GOOGL) | 955.55 | 1291.44 | 1207.08 | +34.96 | +2.98 | +14.6 |
| JPMorgan (JPM) | 94.91 | 119.33 | 112.84 | -5.01 | -4.25 | +5.6 |
| Johnson & Johnson (JNJ) | 118.62 | 148.32 | 138.17 | -4.71 | -3.30 | -1.1 |
| Exxon Mobil (XOM) | 72.16 | 89.30 | 85.02 | -0.15 | -0.18 | +1.7 |
| Visa (V) | 153.74 | 150.64 | 158.08 | +0.04 | +0.03 | +31.6 |
| BoFAMIL (BAC) | 25.12 | 33.05 | 28.46 | -1.57 | -6.06 | -0.2 |
| Walmart (WMT) | 77.50 | 109.98 | 93.91 | -1.89 | -2.08 | -4.9 |
| Pfizer (PFE) | 33.20 | 44.46 | 44.07 | +0.01 | +0.02 | +21.7 |
| UnitedHealth (UNH) | 186.00 | 271.16 | 266.04 | -0.63 | -0.24 | +20.7 |
| Wells Fargo (WFC) | 50.26 | 66.31 | 62.56 | -2.43 | -4.42 | -13.4 |
| AT&T (T) | 30.13 | 39.90 | 33.58 | -0.20 | -0.59 | -13.6 |
| Home Depot (HD) | 190.53 | 215.43 | 207.18 | -5.24 | -2.47 | +9.3 |
| Berkshire (BRK) | 270250.00 | 334550.00 | 328008.05 | -11335.95 | -3.42 | +7.5 |
| Chevron (CVX) | 108.02 | 133.88 | 122.28 | +1.15 | +0.95 | -2.3 |
| Mastercard (MA) | 138.84 | 224.36 | 222.61 | +0.71 | +0.32 | +47.1 |

LARGEST MUTUAL FUNDS

| Fund Name (TICKER) | % Total Returns | Exp. Ratio | Assets (mil.\$) |
|--|-------------------|------------|-----------------|
| | YTD 1 Yr 5 Yr* | | |
| Vanguard 500 Index Admiral (VFIAX) | +10.5 +18.3 +13.8 | 0.04 | 262,997 |
| Vanguard Total Stock Mkt. Idx. Adm. (VTSMX) | +10.6 +18.0 +13.3 | 0.04 | 213,705 |
| Vanguard Total Intl Stock Index Inv. (VGTSX) | -3.1 +2.2 +4.3 | 0.17 | 131,911 |
| Vanguard Institutional Index I (VINIX) | +10.5 +18.3 +13.8 | 0.04 | 127,216 |
| Fidelity Contrafund (FCNTX) | +16.8 +25.5 +15.4 | 0.84 | 101,596 |
| American Funds Growth Fund of Amer A (AGTHX) | +14.4 +22.9 +14.4 | 0.62 | 93,649 |
| Vanguard Wellington Admiral (VWENX) | +3.6 +8.6 +9.0 | 0.17 | 88,458 |
| Fidelity 500 Index Premium (FUSVX) | +10.5 +18.3 +13.8 | 0.04 | 82,791 |
| American Funds Income Fund of Amer A (AMECX) | +1.4 +5.2 +7.5 | 0.54 | 74,915 |
| American Funds Capital Income Bldr A (CABAX) | -1.5 +1.1 +5.4 | 0.58 | 66,992 |
| American Funds American Balanced A (ABALX) | +4.2 +9.1 +9.1 | 0.57 | 66,613 |
| American Funds Invmt Co of Amer A (AMVX) | +6.9 +13.7 +12.2 | 0.57 | 63,919 |
| Vanguard PRIMECAP Adm (VPMAX) | +14.6 +23.8 +17.2 | 0.31 | 62,133 |
| Dodge & Cox International Stock (DODIX) | -6.4 -4.6 +3.5 | 0.63 | 59,059 |
| American Funds Washington Mutual A (AMWSX) | +7.0 +14.4 +12.1 | 0.57 | 38,694 |

INTEREST RATES



BANK SAVINGS YIELDS

| HIGHEST SMALL SAVER RATES | Rate | Phone | HIGHEST JUMBO SAVINGS RATES | Rate | Phone |
|---|------|----------------|---|------|----------------|
| MONEY MKT. & SAVINGS ACCT. YLD. (0.21% nat'l avg) | 2.01 | (800) 975-HSBC | Goldman Sachs Bank USA, NY | 3.10 | (855) 730-7283 |
| VirtualBank, FL | 2.01 | (877) 998-2265 | MONEY MKT. & SAVINGS ACCT. YLD. (0.39% nat'l avg) | 2.01 | (877) 998-2265 |
| Goldman Sachs Bank USA, NY | 1.90 | (855) 730-7283 | VirtualBank, FL | 1.85 | (877) 505-1933 |
| | | | ableBanking, ME | | |