Early on the morning of November 17, 2010, the ABC cafeteria was packed to capacity as a record number of supporters sat down to enjoy the annual Benefactor’s Breakfast. The room was warm from the sheer number of people, but also from the stories of success shared by employers, donors, and others. Tom Murray shared with the supportive crowd that his days in the ABC building began in the late 1950’s when he was a manager for the original occupant of the building – IBM. Tom told the crowd, “The enthusiasm of the late Ken Zubay, the staff and participants, has continued to inspire Betty and I to support the programs of ABC.” He continued, “The jobs on the work floor and in the community were unimaginable during my tenure on the Board of Directors [1964-1998] and the Development Team [2003-2009]. Tom encouraged those in attendance to look at the many individual successes and ABC’s willingness to look “outside the box” as witness to how ABC has survived, and even thrived during the hardest of economic times.

Next, Dennis DeBruin, from the Mayo Clinic Media & Publishing Division, echoed the need for continued support of ABC. Dennis told the group that when he started his job at Mayo, there were warehouses full of boxes upon boxes of archival photos and documents that might be helpful in telling the story of the Mayo Clinic. One of the jobs he was given was to get that enormous amount of material under control. It needed to be scanned, tagged, and organized so it could be used. Dennis described how, when called upon, ABC came through by forming a team made up of current employees in the Paperless Office Solutions work area, as well as other ABCers who were eager to learn “high tech” work. To date, the Mayo Digital Imaging team has made a huge dent in the archive. Individuals on the team have expanded their skill sets and gained confidence.

Dennis made it clear that he and his colleagues see the collaboration as nothing short of a perfect win-win. ABC participants gain new skills in a highly competitive field while working in a professional environment, and Mayo Clinic can better and more flexibly tell their unique story while reducing strain on their warehousing and personnel.

Then, ABC Job Coach Jamie Nandory described how working with Mayo staff in a Mayo environment, doing important and challenging work, was positively impacting individuals on her team. Finally, Jeff Amundson, who acts as guardian for one of the team members who was present at the breakfast but chose not to address the group, spoke very emotionally about that ABC client’s life prior to coming to ABC, and how ABC and specifically digital imaging and data entry work has made a huge and positive impact on the client’s life.

After all that and a hearty breakfast, tours were offered and taken, and everyone went on with their days, newly invigorated and inspired by the great things that can be achieved when doubt is set aside and people are given a chance.

A Brand-New Ride in Houston County

This summer we reported that ABC Works in LaCrescent was awarded a grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation that would cover 80% - or roughly $43,495 - of the cost of a new van. On a snowy December 14, 2010, “A Brand-New Ride” became reality. Donors and board members gathered to see and celebrate its arrival. The bus, equipped with three wheelchair tie downs and able to accommodate 10 ambulatory passengers, will provide transportation daily to and from worksites in the Caledonia area. And now the new bus is totally paid for, thanks in large part to donors and supporters of ABC programs and services in Houston County.
ABC clients are involved in another exciting new work opportunity that capitalizes on their interest in computers and vocational goals. **Ability Built Computers** is the new face of what used to be the United Way of Olmsted County’s Refurbished Computer Program (you may remember it as CompuSwap, an even earlier name of the program). Each week as many as 10 volunteers work alongside several clients to disassemble, clean, test, and reassemble donated computers. The computers are then loaded with fresh operating systems and software and offered to low-income families, individuals with disabilities, and nonprofits and schools, at costs between $50 and $150.

Like all ABC programs and services, **Ability Built Computers** benefits our clients while providing long-term stability to the company and value to the community. Eligible recipients of these refurbished computers gain affordable access to increasingly essential “level-the-playing-field” technology. Like Charles (right), ABC clients learn skills necessary to build and configure computers, making great strides in confidence and goal achievement. The volunteers, many of whom came over from the United Way with the program, enjoy giving a meaningful service back to the community. Finally, the companies that donate the equipment are pleased to see it have a second life that is as important, and perhaps, more important, than the first.

The program is currently focused on the sale and distribution of PCs, but is always looking for additional clients with an interest in this kind of work, as well as ways for clients already working in the area to hone their tech skills and learn new skills, including virus removal, erasing and formatting hard disk drives, and other useful computer services.

### 5 Ways **You** Can Help **Ability Built Computers**

1. **Call **Ability Built Computers** for technology solutions**
   - a. computer repair
   - b. virus removal
   - c. “wiping” hard drives clean

2. **Donate your used computers**
   - a. desktops - 3Ghz Pentium 4 or faster
   - b. laptops - any operational
   - c. monitors - any flat screens, no CRTs

3. **Spread the word to your school or nonprofit**

4. **Donate equipment or tools.**
   - a. work tables
   - b. screwdrivers
   - c. ESD wrist straps

5. **Donate money.**

To discuss computers, donations or services, call **Ability Built Computers** at 535-7119.

See us @ [http://www.abcinc.org/abilitybuilt/](http://www.abcinc.org/abilitybuilt/) email abilitybuilt@abcinc.org
Volunteers Make a Difference

In October at the Employee Recognition Banquet, ABC was privileged to present two special people Steve Conners and Craig Kellagher with ABC Volunteer Awards. The awards were given in recognition of each man’s contribution to the growing Volunteer Program at ABC. In 2010, both Craig and Steve demonstrated how much of an impact volunteering can have on our clients, staff, and culture.

Steve began volunteering at ABC in July, 2010, and by October had put in roughly 550 hours, guiding the move, set-up, and (re)opening of Ability Built Computers for business. He has spent countless, priceless hours organizing other Ability Built Computers volunteers (including regular weekly volunteers as well as scheduling and managing IBM Days of Caring volunteer platoons), and working directly with clients, showing them things like how to disassemble, reassemble, and test computers. Steve has made a big difference with his enthusiasm and commitment, and ABC is very grateful.

Last summer and early fall, while most spent their weekends camping, fishing, boating or golfing, Craig worked five weekends, or roughly 50 hours, painting, cleaning carpets and landscaping at ABC. Though the days were long and hot, his time was not overlooked by his employer, Kraft Foods. ABC thanks Craig and Kraft Foods for donating $500 toward ABC programming and service needs in Craig’s name. He encourages others to volunteer a day or two. To find out where volunteers are needed, call 281-6262.

Tom Murray has been an active volunteer at ABC for nearly 50 years. He has held many key leadership positions including President of the Board (twice) and he has served on the Finance, Investment, and Development committees. This just scratches the surface of Tom’s positive influence and impact.

At our Benefactors Breakfast in November, we were honored to present Tom with the ABC Volunteer Award in recognition of his lifelong contributions. He has been an advocate and friend, always working to spread the word about the mission of ABC. Tom is passionate about his support and is an example to many that aspire to reach his level of contribution.

The Weather May Be Frightful, But these Savings Are De-lightful!

Winter came fast and furious this year, and although we knew it was inevitable, the “cold” reality pushed many of us to urgent thoughts of layering to keep warm, and of course the heating bills.

“Hello Winter, been awhile. Can’t say we’re too happy to see you, though...”

At ABC’s main Rochester facility, the good news is that our modern, efficient new boiler is up and running and fully paid for, thanks to generous donations of many individuals and organizations over the past 3 years. The project was begun by Tom Murray’s daughters Margaret, Jean, and Ruth in his honor, for the hundreds of hours he has volunteered at ABC over the years. The total project cost when completed was about $137,000. ABC received two large corporate donations and the Community Block Grant dollars late this year, which covered the last 55% of the project.

The good news doesn’t stop there, though. In its first full month of heating, the smaller, more efficient, more powerful unit exceeded expectations in its reduction to heating costs. We had estimated up to 40% savings during the preliminary planning with TSP and L&M Boiler, but are actually realizing close to a 60% reduction in consumption of fuel. The estimated $20,000 in annual savings could then be shifted to other program area needs.

To all who made the boiler project a reality, thanks!
Celebrating the Successes the Past Year

Whether you attend the Rochester banquet or the Houston County celebration in Caledonia, the ABC Employee Recognition Banquets continue to be events that defy easy comparison. They are, for the lucky attendees, full of the spirit of what ABC is all about, and everyone leaves with smiles on their faces and hope in their hearts.

The Big Night in Rochester

As September came to a close, and ABCers in Rochester looked ahead to pre-winter “goings on”, the vans, hallways, cafeteria, and worksites were all filled with excited talk of the “Big Night”.

Tuesday October 5th was the “Big Night” - the night when everyone pours into the Convention Center for ABC’s annual Employee Recognition Banquet. This is the event that brings participants and staff from all over ABC together with employers, benefactors, volunteers, and parents. We eat, laugh, and basically celebrate our successes of the past year.

The commotion in the front hall was thunderous as everyone arrived, dressed in their best, and waited as patiently as possible for the doors to the great hall to open. When they finally did, the decibel level only increased as everyone sat down and began the very serious business of eating and socializing. As always, the Years of Service Awards showed the camaraderie, love, and respect everyone had for each recipient.

This year, Midwest Manufacturing was honored as ABC’s Business Partner of the Year. ABC provides a wide range of product packaging and repackaging services to Midwest Manufacturing, and Ted Basacker, receiving the award on behalf of the Menard’s supplier, was visibly moved by what he and his colleagues experienced among the 600 or so attendees at the banquet.

Also receiving an award at the banquet was Benchmark Electronics, named ABC’s Community Employer of the Year for 2010. ABC provides Benchmark with crews and independent workers that do all sorts of jobs that keep the production lines moving at the busy electronic component manufacturer. As with all our community-based partnerships, it is one of mutual benefit and understanding. Al Faupel, a senior Production Manager at Benchmark and a person who was significantly responsible for expanding ABC’s responsibilities there, said, “Benchmark is only doing what makes sense, opening doors to a great team of awesome people from our community.”

ABC’s 2010 recipients of the Lowry Award were also honored for their outstanding progress toward goals and improvement in overall work performance. These men and women also served as the evening’s hosts and hostesses, looking sharp and helping to greet and seat all the attendees.
Celebrating the Successes of the Past Year

ABC Works and Woodland Industries had plenty of success stories this past year. So on Thursday October 28th, over 300 participants, friends, supporters, staff, parents, and others got together to recognize these achievements and the individuals and businesses that made them possible.

**Good Times Restaurant** was honored as Woodland Industries’ Business Partner of the Year. Good Times has been a steady employer of Woodland Industries participants over the years. Individuals working together on a team – what ABC calls an “enclave” – provide Good Times with custodial, dishwashing, and bussing support. Good Times also hires Competitive Placement clients directly. Owner Kris Wedl is an advocate for people with disabilities and has not only offered employment through her business, but has influenced other community members and businesses to do likewise. It’s not only the longevity of our relationship with Kris, but the positive role modeling she provides for our participants that makes her and her business the right choice for this award.

ABC Works Employer of the Year, the **Caledonia Argus**, has been providing meaningful in-center work for 25 years. Clients collate a variety of flyers, then box them up and send them back to the Argus offices be inserted in the paper. Everyone loves this job and looks forward to the new flyers’ arrival each week.

Woodland Industries Employer of the Year, **Joe Rud Trucking**, has offered employment for people with disabilities for several years. Joe hired a Woodland worker in November 2007, and two more since then. Joe is flexible with work hours, provides a positive work environment, and has compassion and understanding for our clients. Woodland Industries appreciates all Joe Rud Trucking does for people with disabilities, and looks forward to continuing this great relationship.

This year’s ABC Works Employee of the Year award went to **Bob Serva**. Bob began his career with ABC at Woodland Industries in 1998, and moved to ABC Works in 2000. In the fall of 2004, Bob joined a crew working at Chartwell’s on the University of Wisconsin LaCrosse campus where he continues to work today. And because Bob wants year-round work, he works at Subway during the summer months.

**Steven Cox** has been at Woodland Industries since June of 2009 and has achieved many of his goals, one of which was to try many different kinds of work on several different crews. Steven is a valuable employee in the Twice is Nice store and has learned many general production jobs. Because of Steven’s hard work and positive energy he was voted Woodland Industries Employee of the Year.

The Vicki Wilkes Spirit of Independence Award went to **Karli Harguth** from Woodland Industries. Karli works quite independently at Twice Is Nice, tagging, sorting and hanging clothing, running the cash register, and more. She also enters hours into the payroll system each morning at ABC Works. On October 24, 2009 Karli moved into her own apartment in Eitzen. Karli lives independently with natural supports from her family and friends.
The Ability Enterprises program at ABC in Rochester has been awarded a grant that is already having a positive and exciting impact on AE clients and staff.

The grant, awarded by the Southeast Minnesota Arts Council (www.semac.org), provides funds for nine new weaving looms, four art exhibits where goods will be sold, and the time and talent of fiber artist Nancy Ellison, of Ellison Sheep Farms in Zumbrota, to teach staff and participants how to weave.

Nancy also facilitated the donation of a large floor loom that was entrusted to her by an elderly gentleman who wanted to make sure it ended up in deserving hands. The loom was originally part of an occupational rehabilitation program at Mayo Clinic many years ago.

In addition to the new and donated looms, AE has 4 sewing machines and other craft-related equipment that will be used to teach up to 14 clients at a time the skills needed to weave scarves, wall hangings, placemats, and rugs. Participants will be able to use existing designs or create their own, learn how to set up displays for shows, greet customers, exhibit their weaving skills in a live setting, and sell the things they make. The project started in January 2011, and this phase will run for about 11 months.

This activity is funded by the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council through the Minnesota arts and cultural heritage fund as appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on November 4, 2008.

What Else is Going On in Rochester?

Ability Enterprises is “Weaving” New Opportunities

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The Lowry Award is given bi-monthly to recognize workers in any ABC vocational program for their outstanding progress toward goals and improvement in overall work performance. Each winner is then recognized at the October Employee Recognition Banquet.

Marcia Pierce earned her Lowry award for her flexibility at ABC and willingness to assist at other work sites in the community.

Diane Paulson, her supervisor said, “Marcia comes in each day and gets the list from my desk of orders she is to work on and begins immediately. She will build kit after kit (she knows how to build 15 without a sample) until her list is completed.”

Congratulations Marcia, keep up the outstanding work performance!

Melissa Daniels comes to the worksite daily with a smile on her face, is flexible and willing to try new jobs, and also contributes to the paper route delivery every afternoon.

In August of 2010, Melissa set a goal to roll 200 silverware sets at Olive Garden, where she works each weekday. By November she had already met that goal most days.

Keep up the good work, Melissa!
On October 25, 2010, ABC lost a dear friend. Mary Zubay was active in the WWII war effort as a parachute packer for the Air Force and later as an IBM assembler for the Norton Bomb Site. She was always there to provide her social skills in support of her husband, Ken, while he worked at IBM, served as a state representative in the Minnesota Legislature and volunteered his time in the community.

Mary was known for her sense of humor and her easy smile. She quickly made friends and brought smiles to complete strangers and friends wherever she went. She was an avid and enthusiastic football fan, and wasn’t afraid to show it. She was also an avid and enthusiastic ABC fan, and along with her husband, was guaranteed to be present and accounted for at ABC events big and small. Spreading the word of what was happening at ABC and telling others how they could and should help was also one of the Zubay’s shared passions. Mary was also active in Meals on Wheels, she was a member of the St. Pius Rosary Group, she served on the St. Pius Board of Directors, she worked for Social Services, and she was a St. Pius Librarian.

On Thursday, October 28th, Zzest Market & Cafe held a benefit to honor Ken and Mary and to celebrate Zzest’s First Anniversary. The event raised $1,000, which was donated to ABC.

We will truly miss Mary and her generous support of people with disabilities.

In memory of Mary Zubay:

Bill & Carrie Adamson, Action Graphics, Anonymous, Terri Ehlenfeldt, Mary Jo Fiebiger, Bob & Judy Gluek, George & Evelyn Groves, Jane Harrington Bresnahan, Mr. & Mrs. J. Houkom, John & Joan Joyce, Craig & Laurie Kellagher, Jane Kreidemacher, Elmer & Dorothy Kruesel, Dr. & Mrs. Leo Maguire, Mr. & Mrs. William Martin, Daryl & Tracey Matzen, Mr. & Mrs. James Miller, Tom & Betty Murray, Leona Nelson, Mr. & Mrs. Merle Peterson, Robert & Nicole Spellhaug, Mark & Kim Thornton, Dick & Jeanette Trachy, Anne Worthington.

ABC is honored to receive gifts from family, friends and loved ones in memory of those who have died and in recognition to others who live on. The following gifts were received through November 30, 2010.

**Remembering Others**

**In Memory of:**

Duane Arnold
Arthur Augedahl
Richard Bedard
Stanley Decker
Mary Ernster
Jerry Greseth
Phil Marek
Mike McCabe
John & Jeanne Sugrue
Will Thurk, Jr.
Ken Zubay

**Donor:**

Tom & Betty Murray
Dolores Augedahl
Glenn & Ella VanLaningham
Jane Kreidemacher
Bob & Carol Schwartzhoff
Gary & Cindy Friedt
Tom & Betty Murray
Joe Horihan
Ruth Horihan
James Sugrue
Al & Teresa Feltmann
Action Graphics
Anne Worthington

In memory of Chuck Pavesich:

Mr. & Mrs. David Aakre, Anonymous, Dan & Betty Bielen, Don & Dorothy Bourquin, Howard & Jean Brandt, Karin Byers, Mr. & Mrs. John Cutting, Lyndell Feustel, Mr. & Mrs. Randall Fogelson, Gary & Cindy Friedt, Mr. & Mrs. Paul Grovdahl, Sharon Johnson, Mr. & Mrs. Donald Loftus, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lopez, Annemarie Nusekabel, Mike Pavesich, Paul Pavesich, Mr. & Mrs. Steve Richardson, Sunset Terrace Elementary School, Mr.& Mrs. David Siljenberg, Bob & Betty Sinex, Neil & Peggy Stolp, Mabel Wagner.

In recognition of:

Andrew Beyer
Debra Byers
Robert Herzog
Francis Olheiser & Shayne Olson
Michael Schiltz
Tony Tschida, Sr.
Steve & Lindsay Vanderheiden

**Donor:**

Leslie & Elaine Beyer
Karin Byers
Roger & Irene Herzog
Don & Carol Lamberg
Jim & Cindy Burg
Sandra Tschida
Karl Menninger
Woodland has Outstanding Workers!

In October 2010, Darlene Inglett was chosen as Woodland Industries’ 4th quarter WOW Award winner. Darlene has been a dedicated worker at Woodland Industries since January, 1982. Darlene is an expert at sewing, and challenges herself to a variety of sewing jobs at Woodland. Darlene has worked hard at accomplishing her vocational goals; she has a great work attitude and positive attendance. Woodland Industries would like to thank Darlene for her fantastic work ethic and dedication.

Congratulations Darlene!!!

Lucy Wilkes retired from Woodland Industries on September 30, 2010, after working there for over 16 years. Lucy started working at Woodland on June 13, 1994. Lucy has always challenged herself to learn new general production job tasks and also worked in the Twice Is Nice Store. While at work, Lucy always had a smile on her face and was the first to welcome those who were new to Woodland or those who were just visiting for the day. Lucy really enjoys visiting with friends and family, doing crafts, putting together puzzles, and making her famous creamy apple squares. Lucy can now enjoy these things that are so dear to her.

Congratulations Lucy on Your Retirement!!!

Save the Dates:

Houston County Bowling and Euchre Tournament April 16th, 2011
“On the Tee” with ABC Golf Tournament June 13, 2011