



inside

Ability Building Center

December 2006

ABC

Growing, Building, Working Together

Thanks to everyone who made our 50th Anniversary Open House and Chamber After Hours on November 2nd a big success!



ABC Works manager Judy Wandling talks about the Houston County sites and products.

Retired staff Sunny Moore and husband Dan toured the building and visited with staff.



Chamber After Hours guests visit.

Published for friends of Ability Building Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in Southeastern Minnesota by providing rehabilitation and employment services for persons with disabilities and other special needs.

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Special Thanks to Canadian Honker Restaurant, Paul Krause, Outback Steak House, Plants PS, Betsy Singer, Think, Zubay Restaurants, and our 50th Anniversary Team: Wally Bigelow, Larry Erickson, Steve Hill, Laurie Kellagher, Tom Murray, Bruce Remme, Dave Stenhaug and Ken Zubay, for their generous contributions!



www.abcinc.org



From the Desk of the Executive Director **Steve Hill**

It's hard to believe that the end of 2006 is already here. It has been a busy year celebrating ABC's 50th Anniversary. Throughout the year there have been many opportunities for the public to help celebrate. We concluded our official celebrating with a public Open House on November 2nd. Many friends of ABC and businesses participated in tours and enjoyed refreshments and cake donated by the Canadian Honker Restaurant & Catering. Following the Open House, ABC hosted the Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours. The Outback Steakhouse provided great food and refreshments for this event. Well over 300 individuals attended these events.

Prior to the Open House, ABC held its annual recognition banquets in Rochester and Houston County. We enjoyed celebrating the accomplishments of the many people served by ABC, staff and community businesses. We estimated that there were over 600 in attendance at the Rochester banquet and approximately 250 at the Houston County banquet. Much of this newsletter is devoted to articles and pictures about our banquets.

Other news to report on this year is the expansion of our Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H) program in Rochester. New space has been developed to serve an ever growing population of people that need more social and leisure activities, instead of work in their retirement years. We currently are serving 19 individuals in this program and are projecting steady growth and referrals into 2007.

Our Adult Day Care program for persons with traumatic brain injuries has also moved into additional space. We had reached capacity later this summer, but were able to renovate space within ABC's main building to meet the growing program needs. We began serving people in late October in the new space. There are 10 individuals currently being served and we expect continued growth.

As we move into the next 50 years of service for ABC, I anticipate that there will be new challenges and opportunities for us to address. I'm optimistic that ABC is poised and prepared to deal with the changes that will come our way in the future and that we will be able to continue to provide quality services and carry out our important mission throughout Southeastern Minnesota. However, we will continue to need the support that we have come to rely on from all the communities where our services will be provided. I hope we can continue to rely on you for support next year and into the next 50 years.

Successful United Way Campaign



Another year has passed and another campaign for the United Way has come to an end. Thanks to all of the participants and staff of Ability Building Center, we have raised over \$4,500 for the United Way. Since we increased our donations by 15% or more we have qualified for the "pacesetter" award from United Way. Even Steve Hill, the Executive Director of ABC, had fun this year and received a pie in the face for 50 pledge forms handed in.

It was a great year to show United Way our appreciation for all the support they have provided Ability Building Center throughout the years.

Rochester 2006 Awards Banquet

Employee of the Year



Jason Bale was named the 2006 ABC Employee of the Year. Jason is a dishwasher and prep cook at Whistle Binkies four days a week. When not at Whistle Binkies, Jason works at ABC in a variety of jobs including running the auto bagger and helping out on the dock. One of Jason's recent accomplishments is the completion of forklift training so he could be a driver on the dock. In the recent past, he has worked in engraving, Mayo Medical Labs, and in screen printing. Jason's great attitude, friendliness, flexibility, plus good work ethic and skills make him a man in demand.

Jason's Program Coordinator, Alan Rodgers, said, "Jason is a very busy guy when it comes to working, but that is what he wants and likes to do."

Business Partner of the Year

IBM Rochester was named ABC's Business Partner of the Year for 2006. Together ABC and IBM have been partners for the past five decades and both are celebrating 50th anniversaries this year.

The Extended Employment program Errand and Messenger contracts have been at the Rochester facility for over twenty years. The Errand Service team provides the delivery of internal mail daily to IBM and Manpower administrative assistants. The Messenger Service team provides the delivery of hardcopy print directly to the customer offices throughout the plant five days a week. IBM continues to provide 11 workers with the opportunity to be a part of an integrated work force and learn new job skills. Supervisors Jane Kreidermacher and Kim Mason stated that "IBM has acknowledged people with disabilities in a job environment that continues to enhance their lives as well as alleviate the work load of its regular and contract employees."



Employer of the Year

PEMSTAR, Inc. of Rochester was named ABC's Employer of the Year for 2006. Ability Building Center has been in partnership with PEMSTAR since 1997. Together a crew and job coach does recycling and materials handling. This includes preparing materials for the compactor, doing bin runs through the plant, and separating different types of materials for reuse at PEMSTAR five days a week. Ability Enterprises also does a large amount of paper shredding for PEMSTAR at ABC.

Ability Enterprises Department Manager Kelly Voigt describes PEMSTAR, Inc. and its staff as being very supportive and strong advocates of ABC services and mission. Voigt states, "PEMSTAR has provided quality work opportunities to ABC workers. In almost 10 years, PEMSTAR has provided work for more than 25 participants. PEMSTAR is committed to the success and well being of ABC workers."





Houston County 2006 Awards Banquet



Woodland Industries Employee of the Year

Harlan Lien was chosen by the participants as the 2006 Employee of the Year. "Harlan has worked at Woodland Industries since September 3, 1991. Since that time Harlan has worked at various enclave job sites and has done several different job tasks at Woodland Industries. Harlan has improved his productivity, has regular attendance, is very punctual, has a wonderful attitude and gets along great with all of his co-workers and job supervisors. Harlan is a team player who is very dependable and will volunteer to help out when needed," explained Roger "Mac" McCabe.

ABC Works Employee of the Year

John Stapleton was named Employee of the Year for ABC Works. He started in 1988, working the P.M. shift with Houston County DAC. During that time, he worked as a groundskeeper at the Wildcat Park. Since 2001 he has been performing janitorial duties at the county Courthouse, and stocking shelves and bagging groceries at Hometown IGA in La Crosse. Currently, John works at subway in Onalaska.



Vicki Wilkes Memorial Award

The Vicki Wilkes Spirit of Independence Award is given in memory of Vicki Wilkes by Danielle Burg, owner of Time Travel. This award is given annually to a participant from Woodland Industries or ABC Works who has demonstrated a growth in independence over the past year.

The Vicki Wilkes Spirit of Independence Award was presented to **Paula Betten**. "She is a very positive person with a great work ethic and willingness to offer assistance. She is very energetic and very popular with others because of her personality," stated Danielle Burg. Paula has worked at various enclaves throughout the year as well as working on the janitorial crew at Caledonia Haulers, ten years as a crossing guard for Caledonia Schools, and recently joined the UWL crew a few nights per week.

ABC welcomes Tom Murphy to our Board

Tom Murphy of Caledonia joined the Board in August of 2006. He was publisher of the Caledonia Argus, a weekly newspaper, for 26 years, selling the paper in 1998. He is now working for Mutual of Omaha and serves as president of the A.B.L.E. board in Houston County. A.B.L.E. provides housing and non-work activities for the disabled in Houston County.

"It has been the most satisfying and important volunteer work I've ever done to be involved with programs that serve the disabled and I will bring dedication and commitment to the ABC Board," he said.





Woodland Industries Employer of the Year

Spring Grove American Legion, Drydal-Prolow, Post # 249 was chosen Employer of the Year for 2006. The Legion has competitively employed two of Woodland Industries participants since 2001. Both participants are presently employed with the Legion, and have expressed that their employment with the Legion has been a very enjoyable experience. The Legion has shown to be strong advocates and very supportive of our participants that work there.

ABC Works Employer of the Year

Blumental Lansing Company, Lansing, Iowa, was named Employer of the Year for ABC Works. Since 1996 they have provided workers with both in-house and community work. Some of the in center work includes decarding, carding, and packaging buttons.

The workers enjoy the beautiful drive down to Blumental Button Company in Lansing, where they load the buttons to bring back to ABC Works and unload the finished product.

ABC Works has enjoyed the working relationship with Blumental, and hope to continue for many more years.



Minnesota Rehabilitation Association Large Non-Metro Employer of the year



On Thursday November 2, Charter House was honored at the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association annual fall conference for Large Non-Metro Employer of the year. They earned this achievement through a nomination from Ability Building Center. Linda Anderson was on hand to receive the award and speak of her experiences with ABC.

ABC has an 8 year relationship with this community-based employer. Charter House provides ABC participants and the field of disabilities with valuable vocational experiences including; job shadows, informational job interviews, interview feedback to ABC and candidate, and the options to have placement staff present throughout the interview process. In this 8 year period, Charter House has employed 14 individuals in Competitive, School to Work, Work Adjustment Training, and Supported Employment Programs. In addition to these valuable services, Charter House staff has been strong advocates for their employees and promotes hiring individuals from ABC to their colleagues throughout Mayo Clinic.



Thanks!

To Rochester Public Utilities for their assistance in funding \$11,000 of the \$31,500 for the electrical power transformer upgrade necessary to ABC Rochester in 2006.



It is an amazing gift provided through the IBM Corporations On Demand Community Grant by Steve Kann, Bruce Remme and Dick Quinn. Through their hard work and dedication to Ability Building Center, they were able to provide PACTT (People Achieving Change Through Technology) with two new ThinkPad Laptops and an Infoprint 1552 printer. The laptops provide up-to-date technology for assessments, presentations, and mobility to individual's place of employment, homes, school, etc. Since receiving the laptops they have been used for each of the purposes listed above. In addition they serve as an extra work station for workshops at PACTT and when all of the work stations are in use.

The printer has provided PACTT with easy access to forms and information being printed for the PACTT staff and consumers it serves. This donation has made a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities!



To the Rochester West and Sunrisers Kiwanis Clubs for their donation which we used to purchase a lift table for the General Services work area. The lift table will provide staff and participants with a safe way to load and transport boxes, parts, etc.



To the Rochester Civitan Club for their donation to purchase a stove for the Abilities Unlimited expanded program space. The stove will be used to assist participants with independent living skills.

Tributes and Memorials

ABC is honored to have received gifts from family, friends and loved ones in memory or those who have died and in tribute to others who live on. The following gifts were received through November 30, 2006.

In Memory of:

Aurthur Augedahl
Richard Bedard

Amanda Carlson
Betty Dickson
Dennis Zortman
Leslie Weber
Father Virgil Duellman

Clarence Engrav
Walter Hill
Harold Jackson
Frank & Verda Kreisel
David Michelsen
Marian Pederson
Sherwood Peterson
Laurence Ready
Louise Shefelbine

Donor:

Dolores Augedahl
Katie Spencer & friends from Gramercy
Doug & Jennifer Westra
Craig & Laurie Kellagher
Doris Williams
Todd & Ann Sutton
Katherine Weber
Peter & Margaret Coleman
Craig & Laurie Kellagher
Barbara Wolfs
Beatrice Hill
Doris Williams
Bob & Linda Livingston
Judy Tollefsrud
Bob & Linda Livingston
Therese Peterson & Sharon Fitting
Doris Williams
Richard Badger
John Brunnette
Kenneth & Sharon Roland
Wendland, Utz, Stahl and Mintz
Kenneth & Lorraine Wittlief

In Memory of:

Valery Thillen
George Topness
Tony Tschida, Sr.
Janet Volkmar
Kathleen Zortman

Donor:

Terry & Autumn Thillen
Harry & Evelyn Sykes
Sandra Tschida
Peter & Margaret Coleman
Guy & Bonnie Gregerson
Bernard & Glendola Loers
David & Denise Nichols
Allan & Carla Townsend

In Honor of:

Dale Ableitner
Lisa Meiners
Tom Murray
Laureen Rupprecht
Rachel Weitzel

Donor

Grace Franz
Don & Lavona Meiners
Roger & Lois Carlson
Charlotte Rupprecht
Stan & Bonnie Jorgenson

In Memory

If you have been a shopper at the HyVee Crossroads you probably knew Amanda by sight, if not by name. She was the Courtesy Clerk with the energy that never stopped and with a hair color that for a while varied almost week to week. Her HyVee manager would have been happy to clone her because she was such a good employee.

Amanda received ABC services from March 2001 until August of this year when she passed away. Amanda will be remembered for many things. On her work resume she stated some of her work related strengths. They included: excellent attendance, good ability to get along with others and work cooperatively with them, organized, good at bagging groceries, and willing to learn new things. These were all appreciated by HyVee. ABC staff who knew Amanda added the following to Amanda's list. She had an infectious laugh and a ready smile, she spoke her mind and had no hidden agenda, and she was enthusiastic in voice and body language. When Amanda was asked what she liked best about her job, she said "customers and co-workers." She was a perfect fit for a store that claims to have a helpful smile in every aisle. It was a privilege to know and work with Amanda.

Doreen Markus
Wayne Schut





From all of us, to you our donors and volunteers, thanks and Happy Holidays!



Please notify us if you would like to read our newsletter online.

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