



ABC's Fall Classics

As we flipped the calendar page to October, most of the nation focused their thoughts on which teams are in the hunt for the World Series of baseball; the folks at Ability Building Center are setting their sights on a different kind of "fall classic."



That classic is the ABC Annual Awards and Appreciation Banquet, a time when the workers from all of ABC's programs are together to celebrate their accomplishments. As you walk into the filled room, you feel the camaraderie.



"As a new staff person of a couple of weeks, I was overwhelmed. It is so great to see the peer to peer excitement for the workers who are being awarded for five years of service or twenty years. The excitement is the same."

Anonymous

**It's a feeling like no other;
this is ABC's Oscar night.**



Jenny Gregerson celebrates 10 years of service at ABC.



Steve Betz, a dedicated ABC employee for 25 years.



ABC Ability Building Center

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.

Ability Building Center
1911 14th Street NW
PO Box 6938
Rochester, MN 55903-6938
(507)281-6262 (voice/TTY)

ABC Vocational Development Services
316 Elton Hills Drive NW
Rochester, MN 55901
(507)529-4812 (voice)

ABC Works
62 North 3rd Street
PO Box 151
La Crescent, MN 55947
(507)895-7161 (voice)

ABC Works
730 North Pine
PO Box 408
Caledonia, MN 55921
(507)725-2057 (voice)

Ability Options
308 Elton Hills Drive NW
Rochester, MN 55901
(507)280-3489

PACTT
310 Elton Hills Drive NW
Rochester, MN 55901
(507) 535-7101

Woodland Industries
521 Old Highway Drive
Caledonia, MN 55921
(507)725-2092

Executive Director: Steve Hill
Editor: Laurie Kellagher
Assistant Editor: Jane Kreidermacher

Contributing Writers: Norma Glawe, Steve Hill, Laurie Kellagher, Jane Kreidermacher, Andy Melde, Judy Wandling, Rachel Weitzel, Larry Erickson, Helen Olson, Becky Vagt

www.abcinc.org

From the Desk of the Executive Director

Steve Hill

October should be labeled as recognition month at ABC. With our annual recognition banquets in Rochester and Houston County, nearly 800 people got into the spirit of celebrating the many corporate, individual and team contributions that were made to ABC throughout 2007. Congratulations to all those that were recognized at one of ABC's recognition banquets this year. We are truly grateful for the contribution and support you've made to the mission of ABC.



It is impossible to capture the energy, enthusiasm and over-all positive vibes that one comes away with after attending an ABC recognition banquet. Everyone comes away with different explanations and reasons as to why they were so positively impacted.

If you've never attended one of our recognition banquets I personally invite you. I'm giving you plenty of time to get it on your 2008 calendar now, because we'll be holding next year's banquet during the month of October again. The Rochester banquet will be held on October 9, 2008 and the Houston County banquet on October 23, 2008. The rest of this newsletter is devoted mostly to recognition and this year's banquets. Read on in the newsletter to learn more about all that happened at this year's events.



**Thank you to
Think Community
Foundation for their
donation to help
us purchase our
new electronic
sign board.**



My Trip to China – Deb Stennes



On September 26, 2007 I flew from Minneapolis to Los Angeles and then on to Beijing for sightseeing and practice. I flew from there to Shanghai for the Special Olympics. At the Opening Ceremony there were over 9,000 athletes and 4,000 volunteers. I was on the Team USA – White which was an all-women basketball team from Minnesota. The teams in our division were USA, Australia, Russia, and Greece.

On my days off I went to the Olympic Village to play soccer, tennis, and shoot hoops. I also did a lot of shopping. The stores in China are different from the ones here – many of them are 5 stories high! I tried the food but still like American food the best.

At the end of the competition, we received the 4th place medal. I returned to Rochester on October 12, 2007.

I am honored to have been selected to be a member of Team USA and to represent my country, my state, Rochester, and ABC. The experience was beyond anything I could have imagined! I would love to share my pictures with you and talk to you about everything I saw. I am hoping to try out for the team for the 2011 games in Greece.

Thank you to everyone who supported me so I could go to China: my roommate, my co-workers, the staff at ABC and the many who support ABC's mission. *"If you dream it, it will happen. We all have something "special" to give to others."*



In November of 1997 Ability Building Center, with the hard work and support of Steve Hill, and 3 staff, opened a new and exciting program. This program did not focus on vocational goals, but instead on helping people with brain injuries to become more independent, confident, and challenged through exploration of

interests, activities, and community connectivity.

Abilities Unlimited opened with 3 participants in November of 1997, and 10 years later, not only continues to serve 2 of those participants but 64 additional participants. Over the years, staff have had the pleasure of working with over 125 people and have seen this program expand, not only in need for additional space, but now including an Independent Living Skills program, a Vocational/ILS readiness program and outreach services to counties beyond Olmsted.

Abilities Unlimited wishes to thank all those that have and continue to support our mission in providing a safe and supportive environment for people with brain injuries to grow.

Lowry Award Winner

The Lowry Award is given bi-monthly to recognize workers in ABC's Extended Employment Program for their outstanding progress towards goals and improvements in overall performance. Winners of the Lowry Award are then eligible for the annual Employee of the Year.

Eric Unger was the winner of the Lowry Award for September/October.

His supervisor said, "Over the last year Eric has grown as a valued employee on the McMurphy's crew. He has shown his ability and skill to complete tasks on a daily basis. Eric often takes on extra tasks, comes in to work on his scheduled days off and holidays if needed."



2007 RECOGNITION

Mayo Collaborative Services Inc. (MCSI) Rochester Business Partner of the Year

The volume of work that ABC receives from Mayo Clinic's MCSI continues to grow and the staff at MCSI continues to be flexible, cooperative, and helpful. MCSI provides employment for over 129 individuals and exceeds in all areas of the selection criteria.

When Mayo Clinic's Jeff Wills asked the filled room, "What does the A in ABC stand for?" "The answer came back "Ability." Jeff responded it also stands for a great "A" Team in all facets of service."

T J Maxx Rochester Employer of the Year

This award is about attitude and giving people a chance to participate, to learn, to succeed, and to develop in real jobs. Courtney Andrist said it very well, "TJ Maxx raises the bar. They look beyond a person's disability to see their ability. They have worked creatively with employees to devise the most effective and efficient means of accomplishing the job."

Mike Ott said, "T J Maxx is very honored to be chosen for the Ability Building Center Community Employer of the Year. ABC is an outstanding organization with dedicated employees. TJ Maxx is proud to be a partner in helping ABC in their commitment to better the lives of individuals within our community."



Fae Hare Rochester Employee of the Year

Stepanie Anders, Ability Enterprises Coordinator said, " Fae has proven herself when it comes to work quality, attitude, attendance, and relationships. She tackles even the difficult jobs, and looks for extra work to keep busy when the job is done. Fae has been able to overcome her shyness and is a great asset to the crew she works on."

Congratulations Fae!

Howard Winholtz Rochester Volunteer of the Year

When he retired, Howard looked for something to do with his time. For over two decades now, he found himself at Ability Building Center one day a week conducting our current events group.

"I came to give others an opportunity to learn about what was happening in our community and learned a lot myself about who ABC was and what they have to offer. Thank you for the opportunity," said Howard.



ION BANQUETS

Quillins IGA ABC Works Employer of the Year

Quillins has been very supportive of our programs. In 1999 Erin Jacobson was hired to stock shelves in their grocery store. In 2006 they brought John Murphy on board to help Erin stock shelves and unload the morning delivery truck. Quillins most recent hire is Sarah Wiste who works in the deli.

ABC Works has enjoyed working with the staff at Quillins and look forward to many more years.



John Michael Murphy ABC Works Employee of the Year

John started at Woodland Industries in 1997 and came to ABC Works in 2000. He has been very helpful with in-center jobs such as stamping popcorn bags for Merchants Bank, collating flyers for the Caledonia Argus and working on the button production.

John has come a long way since his first community job at the LaCrescent High School dishroom. He's busy delivering the Foxy Shopper, labeling vegetable containers at River Valley Sprouts in Houston, filling pop machines in Hokah, doing light custodial work at Grove Collision Center, transferring buttons to and from Blumenthal Button Company in Lansing, Iowa and his newest job, stocking shelves and unloading the morning delivery truck at Quillins. In all John puts in a twenty hour week.

Way to go John!

Kwik Trip - Caledonia Woodland Industries Employer of the Year

Kwik Trip hired Kate Breen on January 1, 2004, and Kate continues to work there. Kwik Trip gives Kate the natural supports she needs to be successful in a community work site. While at Kwik Trip you may see Kate out sampling food, keeping the hot spot filled with goodies, or in the kitchen assisting with some preparation. When Kate was asked why she liked working at Kwik Trip, Kate stated, "I really enjoy all my co-workers, everyone is very nice, and the food tastes great!" *Thank you Kwik Trip for assisting Kate with the opportunity to work in the community and having challenging and gratifying work!!*



Jerry Kurtz Woodland Industries Employee of the Year

Jerry was Woodland Industries first quarter WOW award winner. Jerry has a great attitude, gets along with his co-workers, and takes the initiative to stay busy while at work. Jerry currently works at two enclaves, Merchant's Bank and Hiawatha Valley Mental Health doing light custodial duties. Jerry is very dependable and has a positive attitude towards his work and co-workers.

Great job Jerry!

"We Are the Champions"



Vicki Wilkes Memorial Award

The Vicki Wilkes Spirit of Independence Award is given in memory of Vicki Wilkes by Danielle Burg. 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. This marks the third year that the award has been given.

Jason Stinson is this year's winner of the Vicki Wilkes Memorial Award. Jason's first job was at Shakeys Pizza Parlor, since then he has been employed on the University of Wisconsin La Crosse enclave taking student lunch tickets, cleaning at the ABLE, working at Taco Johns, Twice Is Nice 2 store in La Crescent and most recent employment is Subway. The management staff at Subway said, "Jason is very independent and willing to take on extra duties as assigned."

Way to go Jason!



4th Quarter Wow Award Winner

Ahna Johnson is Woodland Industries 4th quarter WOW award winner. Ahna was chosen because she has been maintaining good attendance, improved her quality, and increased her production. Ahna also has a very positive attitude and gets along well with her co-workers.

"Everyone wins when people with disabilities work!"

On Thursday, November 8, 2007, the City of Chatfield was honored by Ability Building Center of Rochester, for their continued support and commitment in providing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The crew of six participants and one supervisor do custodial work at the City Hall offices and the police department Monday-Friday and Thursday afternoons at a local church.

This business venture is a "win-win" for both ABC and the City of Chatfield.

On Thursday, October 25, 2007 Home Design Studios of Rochester hosted a Women's Extravaganza benefiting Ability Building Center.



Pictured are Matt and Betty Salerno presenting the check to Steve Hill, ABC's Executive Director and Chris who is a member of the ABC Custodial Crew that cleans there once a week.

A total of \$2,328.50 was given to ABC programs and services!

ABC thanks the Salernos and the Home Design Studio staff for their support!



Grant awarded to PACTT

A System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) is located within the Minnesota Department of Administration. STAR's mission is to help ALL MINNESOTANS with disabilities gain access to and acquire the assistive technology they need to live,

learn, work and play. The Minnesota STAR Program is federally funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in accordance with the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended (P.L. 108-364) as stated on their web site www.starprogram.state.mn.us/.

In total, the grant amount is over a two year period. It is the mission of PACTT to continue to share the world of assistive technology to enhance the abilities of individuals. This grant has given PACTT an opportunity to expand the items that are available for loan and demonstration (contact PACTT for catalog) in Southeastern Minnesota. Contact PACTT at (507)535-7101 for further information on assistive technology presentations or to become a loan member.



To assist Amy with her hearing impairment, she communicates with her staff using Interprettype, which provides training for consumers and professionals on assistive technology devices provided by STAR.

Tributes and Memorials

ABC is honored to have received gifts from family, friends and loved ones in memory of those who have died and in tribute to others who live on. The following gifts were received through October 31, 2007.

In Honor of:

Pat Ableitner
Jody Engrav

Donor:

Grace Franz
Erwin Wehinger

In Honor of:

Allison Larson
Vicki Schmidt
Justin Rickmann

Donor:

Grace Franz
Gene & Arlys Schmidt
Eugene & Marilyn Wojtczak

In Memory of:

Florence Becker
Sam & Helen Clendenin
Gwen Deters
Dorothy Erickson
Cindy Gronvold

Donor:

Ron & Kathy Lund
Ralph & Lois Mullally
Barbara Wolfs
Peter & Margaret Coleman
Anonymous
Sharon Boyce
Gene & Denise Cobb
Cindy Cox
Carol Keehn
Cathy Nye
Patricia White

In Memory of:

Elizabeth Markus

Eleanor Mulholland
Don Novotny
Marijo Prigge
Ruth Ramsey
Ruth Ratigan
Alton & Louise Shefelbine
Will Thurk Jr.
Earl Tieman
Tony Tschida Sr.
Cindy Waters Grobe
Leslie Weber

Donor:

Jerry & Marylyn Piotrowski
Robert & Helen Schroeder
Katherine Weber
Lois Toogood
Doris Williams
Gene & Arlys Schmidt
Peter & Margaret Coleman
Jerry & Mary Martell
Richard Badger
Mike & Barb Smith
Eva Tieman
Sandra Tschida
Peter & Margaret Coleman
Katherine Weber

Elizabeth Anna Hoffman
Bill Keller
Heather Kraetsch
Kenneth Lawrence
Bill Macken
Elizabeth Markus

Bob & Barbara Domaille
Steve & Laura Schroeder
Mary Bell
Rita Ann Lawrence
Jennifer Macken
Bill & Mary Aronin
Jane Kreidermacher



Happy Holidays from the ABC staff



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

Change Service Requested

lauriek@abcinc.org
Rochester, Minnesota 55903-6938
PO Box 6938
1911 NW 14th Street
Ability Building Center



Ability Building Center

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #12
Rochester, MN.