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.
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.
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.”

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 McMurry’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.”
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.
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 dish room. 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.

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

In Memory of:
Florence Becker
Ron & Kathy Lund

Donor:
Sam & Helen Clendenin
Ralph & Lois Mullally

Donor:
Gwen Deters
Barbara Wolfs

Donor:
Dorothy Erickson
Peter & Margaret Coleman

Donor:
Cindy Gronvold
Anonymous

In Memory of:
Elizabeth Markus
Eleanor Mulholland

In Memory of:
Evan & Marilyn Wojtczak
Gene & Arlys Schmidt

In Memory of:
Justin Rickmann
Vicki Schmidt

In Memory of:
Jerry & Mary Martell
Ruth Ramsey

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Peter & Margaret Coleman
Ruth Ratigan

In Memory of:
Katherine Weber
Alton & Louise Shefelbine

In Memory of:
Doris Wiliams
Will Thruk Jr.

In Memory of:
Eva Tieman
Earl Tieman

In Memory of:
Sandra Tschida
Tony Tschida Sr.

In Memory of:
Peter & Margaret Coleman
Cindy Waters Grob

In Memory of:
Katherine Weber
Leslie Weber

In Memory of:

Elizabeth Anna Hoffman
Bob & Barbara Domaille

In Memory of:
Bill Keller
Steve & Laura Schroeder

In Memory of:
Heather Kraetsch
Mary Bell

In Memory of:
Kenneth Lawrence
Jennifer Macken

In Memory of:
Bill Macken
Bill & Mary Aronin

In Memory of:
Elizabeth Markus
Jane Kreidemacher

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Jane Kreidemacher

To assist Amy with her hearing impairment, she communicates with her staff using Interpretype, which provides training for consumers and professionals on assistive technology devices provided by STAR.
Happy Holidays from the ABC staff

read our newsletter online.

Please notify us if you would like to

Change Service Requested

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