

Project Eagle Soars

by Bruce Remme, Executive Director

In March of 2017, the ABC Board of Directors approved a key strategic investment called “Project Eagle.” One year later, ABC is operational on all key elements.

Project Eagle was launched to address a major phase of executing ABC's strategic plan. The name was inspired by a participant's drawing with the caption of “ABC Let's Me Soar Like an Eagle” (at right). The project featured implementing new building security measures and transforming back office support with new case management software, integrated billing, payroll, and a full-function HR module.

With support from the Otto Bremer Trust, Mayo Clinic, IBM, and many individual donations, we were able to fully fund and complete the project on schedule. As a result we have greatly enhanced security for our participants, staff, and visitors. The new software application will allow the team to be mobile and unshackled from the intensive manual process we are burdened with today.

Thanks to awesome community support and a dedicated project team, Project Eagle has become a reality that will allow ABC to “Soar to New Heights” well into the future!



ABC Group Urges Lawmakers to “Stop the Cut”

by Hannah Giebtrock, Community Activities & Volunteer Coordinator

On Tuesday March 13th, 2018, a group from southeastern Minnesota's Vocational, Rehabilitative and Residential agencies, including participants and staff from ABC, set out on a journey to the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul. Upon arrival they joined a rally in the rotunda to “Stop the Cut,” followed by meetings with local representatives.

The state legislature is proposing a devastating 7% cut in the funding for Minnesotans with disabilities. These spokespeople from Southeastern Minnesota lobbied to support the Best Life Alliance legislation that would prevent the funding cut.

The group met with legislators Tina Liebling, Carla Nelson, Nels Pierson, Duane Sauke, Duane Quam, and spoke with David Senjem on the phone. By the end of the session, Nelson and Pierson agreed to co-author a bill that would stop the proposed cut. This experience is a great reminder of how vital it is for all of us to make our voices heard!



Spotlight: Jordan and Ryan at Wendy's

It is a new era for supported work programs. More and more individuals are being transitioned to customized work settings away from in-center production. Jordan and Ryan are two of the pioneers in this regard, beginning work in late 2017 as independent hires with the Wendy's South restaurant in Rochester.



Jordan Holt

Jordan Holt is originally from Oronoco, went to school in Pine Island, and moved to Rochester about two years ago. After graduation from high school, he enrolled in college but came to the realization that his career might take a slightly different path.

Seeing the happy, mild-mannered Jordan of today one would never guess that he has battled, and continues to battle, bipolar disorder. Like many with the condition, he likely was affected most of his life but wasn't diagnosed until his symptoms became more pronounced in adolescence.

When he first came to ABC he was skeptical about his ability to keep a job. After a few months he saw that not only was he able to hold down a job, he was able to thrive. When his Coordinator, Miranda Williamson, informed him of the Wendy's opportunity in November of 2017, Jordan was quick to jump at that chance. He was hired the same day he interviewed. "I always wanted a position in the food industry," Jordan explained. "I love the customers and the people I work with."

Jordan lives independently and recently moved into an apartment on his own. When not working, he enjoys playing basketball and reading. He also loves working with kids and is currently considering mentoring with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program.

Ryan Anwiler is originally from Grand Rapids, Minnesota, he moved to Rochester about five years ago and started work at ABC about the same time. His primary responsibilities at Wendy's include greeting customers and cleaning the dining area. Recently he has started branching out to other areas, including food preparation.

His job has helped bolster his self-confidence, problem-solving skills and overall independence. He now lives in his own apartment close to family. Ryan is particularly grateful for the supports provided by Jennifer Talamantes, his ABC Coordinator and Ryan's "favorite person" in the organization. When not working, Ryan enjoys visiting with family and friends, watching TV and playing video games.

Sarah Timmerman, ABC's Director of Program Innovation, recalls how the Wendy's opportunity came about. "I received a call from Kevin Sullivan, General Manager at Wendy's South. At that time, he had one position open that he felt would be a very good fit for an individual who works at ABC. He was passionate about hiring individuals with disabilities."

Jordan interviewed with Kevin and was hired the same day. He started work in the dining room cleaning tables and the floors and greeting customers. He wanted to learn more, so it wasn't long before Kevin provided training on fry preparation. Kevin explained, "He picked it up very quick. He has a photographic memory – anything you tell him he remembers. He is the first line for customer orders in the drive-through. He loves that position and we get lots of compliments from the customers about how likable and professional he is."



Ryan Anwiler

Ryan started shortly after Jordan. "Ryan has also been awesome – he's opening up and talking to people more and more every day. He takes so much pride in his work. One day we had a construction group come in tracking mud. I was working the register and focused on getting the orders for these guys and it turns out Ryan was behind them mopping up the whole time," Kevin recalled.

He added, "Everybody loves Jordan and Ryan and treats them like family. They are just about the most reliable employees we have. They come every day no matter what. They're just incredible – we love having them here."

Sarah shares the same sentiments from an ABC perspective. "The experience so far has been phenomenal. Both Jordan and Ryan have had opportunities to expand their skills with this job, with support of Kevin and ABC staff. Kevin provides a lot of natural supports. ABC staff check-in on both of them at least a couple times a month and additional supports are provided if/when needed based on Kevin's communications/feedback. Kevin treats both of them exactly like he would any other employee, which is exactly how it should be."

Ryan explained his strategy for dealing with those who doubt his ability as "just do it." Jordan's advice is similar, "I've never heard the words 'I can't' in any of the jobs I have done. You'll never know what you can or can't do without trying."

ABC IN ACTION

Winter has been a very eventful time at ABC. So much so that we can't possibly fit in everything we'd like in our newsletter. Instead, we're sharing some snapshots from events during the past few months. For more information on each, visit expanded newsletter content online at abcinc.org.



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Michelle Djonne

Michelle started her job tryout at Hy-Vee last September. She has since made amazing progress with time management, customer service skills and adopting new tasks. Michelle has gained confidence in her abilities and is doing a fantastic job of meeting and exceeding her goals. Working at Hy-Vee was her dream job — now she has earned it!



Wendy Elwood

Wendy is a regular on the Guesthouse and Microtel housekeeping crews and has helped in the Guesthouse Laundry. Wendy has always strived to do her best at work and has worked very diligently to improve her flexibility, hard work, dedication and initiative. She has a positive outlook on her job and life. Wendy is also very gifted at weaving and crocheting.



Diane Gauger

Dianne was chosen to be this quarter's Woodland's Outstanding Worker as she has presented a positive attitude, always gives her best and is interested in learning new jobs as they arise. Dianne works hard to reach her goals and enjoys working in the Woodland store doing various tasks but especially greeting and visiting with the customers with a smile.



Robert Herzog

Robert Herzog has been with ABC since 1986 and is currently employed with the dish crew at Byron Public Schools and in-center at ABC. Robert has made substantial progress in returning from breaks/lunch on time, become more flexible in his work schedule and ensures he wears all personal protective equipment without prompting.



Brad Neil

Brad was selected for his work ethic, consistently meeting his daily goals and for his willingness to do other tasks without being asked by the job coach. Brad is happy to do any job without complaint. Brad demonstrates a great attitude and is always in a good mood. Brad gets along well with his co-workers and is always willing to fill in.



ABC Launches New Slogan

Early in 2017, some of the members of the ABC Leadership Team participated in a high-level branding exercise to evaluate our marketing strategy, current view of the ABC brand, our target audience, and the best way to reach our stakeholders and donors.

We received valuable feedback suggesting the need for a single message that is consistently used across the organization for marking material, business cards, email signatures and social media messages.

Reflecting ABC's focus on participant *abilities* rather than *disabilities*, our new slogan of **Celebrating abilities ONE PERSON at a time** was born.

Watch for the new slogan in a series of spots now running on KTTC-TV and in all ABC's communications going forward!

RETIREMENTS



Jeff Amaris

The ABC family extends congratulations to Jeff Amaris upon his retirement from ABC. During Jeff's 29 year career, he has made a big impact on the lives of so many staff and participants. His legacy of leading ABC safety programs has earned ABC high marks as one of the best in the in our industry. We will miss his dedication, passion, and commitment. Thank you Jeff for your service!

Larry Goetzinger

Larry Goetzinger retired from ABC Works Woodland Industries on December 7, 2017 after 36 years of employment. Larry had a wide variety of work skills including; working on the wood crew, custodial teams, and with Woodland's Supported Employment. He finally found his true calling with Joe Rud Trucking beginning in March 2007 doing custodial work. Larry soon became known as "The CEO" from owners and staff at Rud's, as Larry seemed to know everything there was to know about the business. Larry took pride in wearing his Rud's uniform every day, and enjoyed hanging out with his friends on the crew. Larry was a big part of Woodland Industries, and Woodland is proud to have been a part of Larry's past 36 years.

TRIBUTES AND MEMORIALS

Steve Betz



On December 9, 2017 we sadly lost Steve "Big Red" Betz. Steve was a joy to be around, and always came into work with a smile on his face. Steve had just celebrated 35 years of employment with ABC Works in La Crescent, MN. Steve was a key member of the nightly laundry crew at ABC, Steve took great pride in his work and enjoyed loading and unloading the washer and dryer for the small change diaper service. Steve loved to sing and dance to his favorite Christmas songs, learn about Jesus at Jesus Cares, and soak up the sun during NASA Squirrel pontoon rides. Steve was a very compassionate friend who would console anyone who was down, and loved to make others laugh. Steve's enthusiastic energy and welcoming "hey buddy" will be greatly missed by everyone at ABC.

Loren Bushman

Loren Bushman, a long-time participant at ABC, passed away peacefully at his home on January 30, 2018. Last October Loren was recognized at the ABC Awards Banquet for 40 Years of Service.

Loren was a hard worker. He especially liked jobs where he could operate equipment such as custodial floor scrubbers and dish room sprayers. He worked for many years on custodial and dish washing crews at locations throughout Rochester. He was also one of the original weavers of the ABC Weaving Project that started in January 2011. His final project at ABC involved weaving a vest - one he wore to his final resting place.



Loren will be remembered for his pride in being affiliated with ABC and Bear Creek Services, his strong work ethic, willingness to help others, determination to see a project or task through to its end, his many leisure interests, love for his family (especially his two brothers), his hearty laugh and infectious smile.



Nadene "Sunny" Moore

Nadene "Sunny" Moore, 91, of Rochester, MN died Tuesday, January 30, 2018 at the Homestead of Rochester. Sunny was born July 19, 1926 in Tenstrike, MN. After teaching on the Red Lake Reservation, she moved with her family to Rochester, where she worked as a counselor at ABC for 18 years.

Sunny enjoyed gardening, knitting, and was an avid reader. She engaged in volunteer work throughout her life, most recently at Samaritan Bethany where she worked with patients in memory care and also manned the gift shop. She and husband Dan enjoyed 25 years at their cabin on Woman Lake, where they entertained both family and guests.

Wyatt Cox

Former ABC job coach Wyatt Cox passed away Dec. 26, 2017 at his home in Port Charlotte at the age of 25. Wyatt was born in Rochester, graduated from Stewartville High School and was attending RCTC to obtain a Master's Degree in Psychology.

Wyatt was a jack of all trades. He started in manufacturing out of high school, and in his early 20s began working with adults with disabilities. Most recently he was working at a restoration company. Wyatt loved the outdoors and spending time with his daughter.

He will be missed by ABC co-workers and participants and remembered for his caring nature and good cheer.





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On the Tee with ABC 2018

Don't miss the latest installment of ABC's annual golf event on Monday, June 4, 2018. This year's tournament will again be held at the beautiful Rochester Golf & Country Club.

Sponsorship opportunities are available at many levels. For more information contact Laurie Kellagher at 507-535-7105. Support ABC through your sponsorship and/or participation!

Following is the current schedule of events:

- 10:00 a.m. — Registration
- 11:00 a.m. — Lunch
- 12:00 p.m. — Shotgun Start
- 5:30 p.m. — Dinner
- 6:00 p.m. — Program



Register or sponsor online now at abcinc.org!



Save the date: ABC Annual Meeting, May 1, 2018, 3:45-4:45 p.m. ABC Cafeteria, 1911 14th Street NW, Rochester.
Open to the public — light refreshments will be served.