“On the Tee” Raises $66,588!

On June 8, Ability Building Center (ABC) held its annual golf tournament at the Rochester Golf and Country Club. Thank you to our generous sponsors who make such a successful event year after year.

Our program speaker was Charles Smith. He started at ABC in the School to Work program and is now working in Ability Enterprises. He has worked at ABC for two and a half years. He has had the opportunity to try many different jobs since he started, including custodial, housekeeping, dish washing and lawn mowing. His favorite job is lawn mowing. ABC has assisted him in developing his skills using a weed-whacker and a push mower. Last year he was able to work independently at the Eagles Club. He helped set up and take down tables for weddings. He also bussed tables and washed dishes. His Coordinators at ABC assisted in communication and training with his manager at the Eagles which helped to make his job a more positive experience. He is grateful for the opportunities and learning experiences he had while working independently. In the future, he would like ABC to start a snow removal service and expand our paper delivery routes into other neighborhoods throughout Rochester. His main goal is to work hard and become more independent so that one day he may be able to transfer to the Supported Employment program here at ABC. Keep up the great work, Charles!

Special thanks were given to Larry Erickson, our former Assistant Director, who retired in June. He had been the chair of the annual golf tournament team since it began in 2001. Larry began working at ABC 39½ years ago. He began his career in rehabilitation at a community rehabilitation program in Duluth where he was a supervisor for a 200 participants. After seven years in Duluth, he moved to Rochester and took on the responsibilities of Production Director at ABC. From 2001 on, he has served as the Assistant Director. Although his role had changed from doing direct care in a vocational setting to one of primarily an administrator, he most valued the personal interactions with those individuals he served. Larry has had positive impact on hundreds of individuals he has worked with. He has enjoyed his contribution to the success and growth of ABC. He was instrumental at helping ABC expand the Rochester location and develop our three sites in the Houston County area. Larry looks forward to spending more time golfing with his wife Karen and working on his farm. He also enjoys watching his grandchildren play football and volleyball. Larry plans to stay involved with ABC as a volunteer and special project consultant. Enjoy your retirement, Larry, and thank you for your many years of dedicated service to ABC!
ABC’s Visit to Fastenal Headquarters in Winona

On May 1st of this year, participants and a few staff from ABC in Rochester had the opportunity to visit and tour Fastenal’s Distribution Center and Manufacturing Facility in Winona, Minnesota. Fastenal was presented with the “Business Partner of the Year” award at the ABC 2014 annual awards banquet in Rochester this past October. They were honored for the generous amount of hours of center-based work they have distributed to ABC. They have provided work from their Rochester and Dodge Center Fastenal locations, as well as opportunities for Woodland Industries in Caledonia, Minnesota.

Fastenal has provided ABC with a wide variety of packaging and fulfillment projects over the past several years, as well as developing a very successful partnership. Thank you, Fastenal, for your great support of ABC and your true professionalism given to us in the tour and visit.

Written by Jeff Walthier, Job Developer

Keeping it Clean

In June of 2013, Ability Building Center (ABC) was contracted by the Rochester Downtown Alliance to help keep the sidewalks clean during the summer. With large numbers of people attending Thursdays on First and patronizing local establishments on the weekends, Monday and Friday mornings found the city waking up to trash and litter along the sidewalks of Broadway and First Avenue. This presented ABC with a unique opportunity. By providing a work crew twice a week, ABC helped save the city money, while providing job opportunities for our participants. In addition, by wearing bright orange shirts that say “ABC” on them, the workers give a positive image to ABC.

The crews start work early in the day on Monday and Friday. The goal is to get the sidewalks on First Avenue cleaned prior to local eateries opening for the lunch hour. During the course of their work, the crew has often been thanked by local business owners and employees for the work they do, which has been called “invaluable.” The crew was even featured in a news story on KIMT News in Mason City two years ago. Visitors have commented that our city looks so clean and we do a great job of keeping it that way.

Written by Vaughn Hanson, Job Coach Supervisor

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Dreams Can Come True!

Congratulations to Megan Whaley who graduated on May 14, 2015 from RCTC with an Associate’s Degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences with high honors! Megan graduated from Mayo High School in 2005, and attended four different colleges before going to RCTC. She was inspired to go back about a year ago and met with her counselor to help make it happen. She also received an award from the International Honor Society. Megan needed to maintain a 4.0 GPA to qualify for this honor. Megan would like to start her own business someday. She is an artist, and her hand-sketched illustration was the winner for this year’s Rochesterfest t-shirt design contest. Everyone from ABC in the Rochesterfest parade wore her design. She also enjoys martial art classes and assists in instructing self-defense classes. Congratulations, Megan, on your continued success!

A Walk in the Park with ABC

Everyone had a wonderful time at this year’s Rochesterfest parade. The weather was great and 30 participants rode on the float or walked the new parade route. We enjoyed handing out candy and interacting with the public. We made connections and promoted work for ABC. Bruce Stolp, one of our custodial workers, was interviewed by news station KTTC. Thanks to J & J Parade Floats who donates a float every year to ABC.

Cruisin’ for Norwegian Support in Houston County

It was perfect weather and a great day to promote ABC’s and Woodland Industries’ annual fundraiser in Houston County. Spring Grove’s Syytende Mai Parade, celebrating our Norwegian Heritage, was the setting for this group to advertise Hittin’ the Sand for Woodland! Paul Morken, from Spring Grove, donated his boat for the event and Pepsi donated a sign to help spread the word. We hope to see all these fine Norwegians on our Car/Boat/Bike Cruise on August 1st, 2015!

Written by Sheila Heberlein, Program Coordinator
Double Your Giving Impact!

In December of 2014, Ability Building Center (ABC) requested funds to help install a “Loop” hearing system in our large conference room to benefit individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Thank you for your overwhelming response of support! The system was installed in February of 2015. We would now like to expand this technology into our cafeteria. The total cost of this project is $24,000.

Recently, a generous ABC contributor offered to participate in a one-time gift matching opportunity. Any donations received will be matched up to $5,000. So far we have received $2,650.

A generous gift-matching offer like this is rare, and its time is short. Please help ABC raise money to install this “Loop” hearing system in our cafeteria. This space and equipment will be available to the community, enabling other organizations, families or community groups to benefit from this investment.

On behalf of everyone connected with ABC, thank you for considering this exciting and unique opportunity to support this project. You can make a secure donation online at http://www.abinc.org/support/donate.html or contact Laurie Kellagher at 507-535-7105.

Thanks to Jim Sloan for testing our new loop hearing system!

Flood Waters Wash Out Woodland Industries for a Day

On June 15, 2015, Woodland Industries had a very eventful day! Around 12:30 PM, two inches of rain fell in a very short period of time, leaving Woodland Industries flooded. Staff were proactive able to pick all the product up off the work floor so that nothing was damaged. Four staff and three participants worked until 3:30 PM moving the water that had entered the building. The floors were then mopped with bleach water to prevent contamination. Participants had to sit in the break room to ensure their safety until forms of transportation could be arranged for evacuation. Woodland has experienced several floods in years past, but this was the worst, as water got all the way in to the sewing department near the front of the building.

Written by Sheila Heberlein, Program Coordinator

Torrential rains both inside and out at Woodland Industries!

Getting an autograph from Alex Shultz.

Phil, Mark, Corey & Libby enjoy attending a Honker’s game sponsored by the Shulz family.

Judy & Slider the Honker mascot.
Congratulations
Lowry and WOW Award Winners!

Kenneth Bedtka has been working at ABC for eleven years! He has really made progress with his work goals. Kenny is not afraid to try new jobs in Mayo Medical Labs (MML) and work with others. He is willing to do whatever job is assigned to him and never complains.

Tessah Galegher is an amazing worker. She is willing to do any job. She wants everything to be completed and look great. She rarely misses a work shift and is very pleasant to her coworkers. Thanks to winning the Lowry Award, everyone can see what an amazing worker Tessah is!

Eric Peterson has made many improvements since he started work. He comes to work with a smile on his face and is eager to get started. Eric is skilled at each of his responsibilities at the hotels he works at, and rarely needs to be prompted to stay on task. He is always asking to try new jobs and is a great team player. Eric has grown a lot in the past months. He has made great progress on his goals. Eric is very enjoyable to work with.

Kurt Joblinske’s positive attitude, work skills, and flexibility make him stand out from his coworkers. Kurt’s attendance and attitude towards work have made unbelievable improvements. He has been more than willing to pick up numerous subbing spots at the DAHLC men’s locker room and has earned a permanent spot there. Kurt’s quality and speed are excellent! He also expresses how grateful he is to be given new opportunities at ABC.

Dylan Clauson is the second quarter WOW (Woodland Outstanding Worker) Award winner! Dylan is a very easygoing guy that started working at Woodland Industries at the beginning of September 2014. In Dylan’s short time working here, he has shown that he is a hard worker and is well-liked by staff and co-workers. Dylan is willing to try any job and does it with a smile on his face. Dylan’s good attendance and increasing productivity make him a valued member of our Woodland team. Congratulations, Dylan, and thank you for all your hard work!

Elizabeth Moldenhauer is the 2015 third quarter WOW Award winner. Liz not only works part time at Woodland Industries, but also works part time as a Retail Helper for Kwik Trip in Nodine, Minnesota. While at Woodland, Liz works in the Twice is Nice store, learning retail skills, does general production, and also works Tuesdays during the school year as a food server at the high school in Caledonia. Liz works approximately 15 hours a week at Kwik Trip in the kitchen, doing a variety of tasks. She has a great attendance record and is always punctual and ready for work. We are very proud of the accomplishments Liz has made over the years, and we are excited to see more of her outstanding capabilities in the future. Congratulations, Liz!
Board News: Meet Kurt Njos

Kurt Njos is a 2015 graduate of Winona State University, with a degree in Social Work. He works for Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living as an Independent Living Coordinator. He is currently pursuing a Master of Social Work Degree through the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Kurt spent 10 years as an Electrical Lineman. He became involved in the Human Services Field after he sustained a life changing work injury, which left him with a lifelong disability that caused him to pursue a new career. Kurt has found that his true passion is working with people who have a disability and he is very excited to be involved with Ability Building Center. Kurt and his wife Karl live outside of Chatfield and have one amazing daughter, Emily. Karl is a Registered Nurse in the Thoracic/Vascular ICU at St. Mary’s Campus-Mayo Clinic.

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