

inside

At Ability Building Center, our mission is to improve the quality of life in Southeastern Minnesota by providing rehabilitation and employment services for persons with disabilities and other special needs.



Winter 2016/17

A publication by and for stakeholders of Ability Building Center

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abcinc.org

2016 Brings Change and Opportunity to ABC

Throughout 2016 ABC has been celebrating 60 years of serving people with disabilities and other special needs. It has been a very special and busy year — you will see many of the highlights in this issue.

Since joining the team as the new Executive Director eight short months ago, I have learned a lot, made a few changes, and each day I am continually amazed and humbled by the lives that are changed; one person at a time, 900 times. All made possible by support from you, the community, and our awesome staff.

I start each day by focusing on our mission and pausing to honor the legacy of our ABC founders who blazed a new path, breaking down barriers for those with disabilities and special needs: Elizabeth Lowry (Founder and Board President), Fred Kennedy (1st Board President 1956), and Ken Zubay (Founder, Board president 1960). Their “founder spirit” is alive and well at ABC today.

One of my favorite places to witness this spirit is at our Lowry Award celebrations. Surrounded by family, guardians, case workers, job coaches, program coordinators, co-workers and staff, a participant is recognized for their accomplishments and outstanding contributions. It is emotional and impactful for all to witness how a community comes together to make a difference in one person’s life.

The past year has been marked by key leadership changes at ABC, new federal and state regulations aimed at revolutionizing person-centered planning, and shifts in our sources of funding, to name just a few. This backdrop of change is our new reality, which presents us with a new set of challenges and opportunities. As our founders did 60 years ago, we will blaze a new path, overcome barriers, and chart the course for the future. By carrying forward our “founder’s spirit” we become stronger and more resolute in fulfilling the mission of ABC.

To all ABC staff, upon reflection of the past eight months, I stand in awe and humbled by what you all do. The outstanding reputation ABC enjoys in the communities we serve, is a direct result of the commitment and dedication you all exhibit on a daily basis. Thank you.

To parents and guardians, thank you for entrusting us with your loved ones. We are committed to providing the support and services each participant needs to succeed at home, at work, and in the community.

To our Benefactors, community of supporters, and volunteers, you are making a difference by investing in the lives of our participants and staff. Without your support we would not be able to fulfill our mission. With the new challenges facing agencies such as ours, your continued financial support is appreciated and needed now more than ever.

Thank You!

by Bruce Remme, Executive Director

Expanded content available online at www.abcinc.org!



Above: ABC Executive Director Bruce Remme cuts the ribbon at a ceremony celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Ability Building Center; Below: Rochester Mayor Ardel Brede with Bruce Remme.



ABC's Discovery Program and KROC Provide Insight into Radio Careers

by Kendra Zenden, ABC Discovery Coordinator

For many of us, our careers are an especially significant part of our lives. The average American works about 34 hours per week, which (depending on the month) is roughly 148 hours per month, and 1,789 hours per year. Nearly four out of ten workers however, put in fifty hours or more, resulting in an incredible 2,600 hours per year. Considering these numbers, it is important to find a job that holds meaning and satisfaction for us.

The Discovery Program at Ability Building Center is designed to assist individuals in finding this job or volunteer opportunity that is meaningful to them. It is a program that is set up to assist ABC participants in every aspect of the job-seeking or community outreach process. Meeting with employers and professionals throughout our community is essential to this process in that it allows for the individuals to get a face-to-face, hands-on interaction with what the job they take interest in entails. The Discovery Participants could spend hours reading or listening to job descriptions online, but actually interacting with employers in our community not only builds a relationship for everyone involved, but also builds on professional interaction skills. The Discovery Program hones in on building many more of these skills including cover letter/resume building, application processes, interview technique and etiquette, work-place appropriate behavior, and more.

New to the Discovery Program is Tessah. Upon meeting with Tessah, it was very apparent that music is an influential part of her life. She names a few of her favorite artists as Miley Cyrus, Nick Jonas, and Joe Jonas and also likes to write some of her own music in her spare time. The Discovery Program made it possible for her to visit the KROC, Y-105, and Quick Country studios with Scotty Matthews from the



Tessah in the broadcast booth with Scotty Matthews of the KROC afternoon show.

KROC afternoon show. Not only was it a fun experience for Tessah, it was also a great way for her to reach out to a local business and build that relationship with a professional in a field she takes so much interest in.

As we all know, finding a suitable job for ourselves or what we are "meant to do" can take a significant amount of time. With the Discovery Program available to Tessah and other participants, it can make this process just a little bit easier and hopefully, a lot more fulfilling.

Minnesota Senate Honors ABC

On October 27, Senator Carla Nelson presented ABC with a resolution congratulating the organization on 60 years of service to Southeastern Minnesota.

During her visit, Senator Nelson also had the opportunity to visit with ABC staff and participants in the Ability Enterprises Program and to see first-hand their daily work.



Senator Nelson (second from left), presents the resolution to (left to right) ABC's Joe Peplinski, Doug Schommer, and Bruce Remme during a ceremony in Ability Enterprises.

MINNESOTA SENATE RESOLUTION

Congratulating Ability Building Center and its staff on its 60th Anniversary.

WHEREAS, the Ability Building Center works to improve the quality of life in southeastern Minnesota by providing opportunities and earned success through providing rehabilitation and employment services for persons with disabilities and other special needs; and

WHEREAS, the Ability Building Center provides work and work opportunities along with recreational and social activities for people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Ability Building Center's staff, benefactors, employers, and participants are devoted to improving our community; and

WHEREAS, the Ability Building Center's work to help over 800 people in the Rochester area is one of great importance; and

WHEREAS, the Ability Building Center and its staff have created an inclusive environment which fosters understanding, compassion, and respect between neighbors in our community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by Senator Carla J. Nelson on behalf of the Senate of the State of Minnesota's that it congratulates the Ability Building Center's staff, participants, employers, and benefactors on 60 years of enriching lives through dedicated service to the communities of Southeast Minnesota.

“DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER”

For this year's banquets, ABC rolled out the red carpet in honor of the organization's diamond jubilee. Both the Rochester banquet on October 11 and the Houston County banquet on October 27 were gala affairs with the theme “Diamonds Are Forever.” In all, some 690 people attended in Rochester and 289 in Caledonia to honor this year's award recipients.

Rochester



Clockwise from upper left: ABC's Doug Schommer with representatives from Mayo Clinic Dan Abraham Healthy Living Center, winners of the ABC Employer of the Year Award; ABC participants celebrate length-of-service awards; ABC's Dan Smith and Julia Ramsey with representatives from Rochester Concrete Products, ABC Business Partner of the Year; this year's Lowry Winners receive their awards; the banquet hall; paparazzi capture emcee Rachel Wick of ABC 6 News with ABC participants on the red carpet. Photos courtesy Southern Touch Photography.

Houston County



Clockwise from upper left: the banquet hall; ABC's Steve Kann and Judy Johnson present a length of service award to Jan Lee Buxengard; Karen Smerud is given a rose by ABC Executive Director Bruce Remme; ABC's Helen Olson presents the Woodland Industries Employer of the Year Award to Caledonia Haulers, accepted by ABC's Carmen Barthel; some of the hundreds of faux diamonds decorating the hall; ABC's Cathy McCabe presents the ABC Works Employer of the Year Award to Subway's Tom Schindler, joined by ABC employee Karen Smerud.

Congratulations

to our latest Lowry and WOW Award Winners!



Kate Breen

Kate is Woodland Industries latest WOW award winner. Kate has been working almost every day and every other Saturday at Kwik Trip as a Kitchen Helper. Kate always ensures her workspace is in order and is always willing to help. She also loves to volunteer in her community.



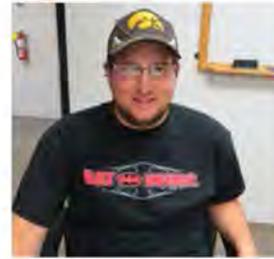
Val Coners

Val has demonstrated exceptional customer service skills and is always willing to help coworkers. She has been a huge asset to ABC because of her dependability, flexibility, and quality of work. Val is truly deserving of the Lowry Award for all of the hard work she does for ABC!



Casey Huegel

Casey has displayed outstanding performance and great versatility, working five different jobs and always managing to keep his schedules straight. He ensures everything is done right while being friendly and respectful to coworkers, job site employees, and customers.



Dallas Jungers

Working for the Ability Built Computers program, Dallas has proven his ability to complete complex tasks, often under severe time constraints and with limited resources. Dallas's productivity has tripled and his attitude towards work has grown to where he often seeks out additional tasks.



Marcel Kemp

Marcel has an excellent work ethic - he truly enjoys working, and shows this by doing any task that is asked of him, even if he is unsure about it. Marcel is willing to go to any job site and often picks up additional shifts. He always has a positive attitude and is kind to those around him.

Dick Kerndt of Kerndt Livestock Products to Serve on ABC Board

by Helen Olson, Woodland Industries



Dick and Deb Kerndt

Dick and his wife Deb own and operate Kerndt Livestock Products. KLP manufactures items including sorting poles, flags, paddles and other items in the USA for distribution to customers across North America.

Some 30 years ago, Kerndt Livestock Products began working with ABC Woodland Industries in the assembly of sorting poles. In the years since, KLP has expanded to produce a number of new products. Sales continue to rise, in large part driven by sales of advertising on these products by banks, drug companies, livestock markets and breeders.

Kerndt products are assembled and shipped with great pride by participants at Woodland Industries. These workers are dedicated to producing a product meeting the highest quality standards while learning valuable work skills.

Dick is a graduate of the University of Nebraska Omaha with a B.A. in Biology and B.S. in Medical Technology. He retired from the Department of Laboratory Medicine at Mayo Clinic after 27 years. He has kept cattle in the Glenwood Springs, Colorado and Caledonia, Minnesota areas.

When not running their company, the Kerndts enjoy traveling, gardening and Twins baseball.

Hittin' the Sand for ABC Works and Woodland Industries

by Sheila Heberlein, ABC Works Program Coordinator

Supporters of ABC literally came out by the boatloads to help raise money for ABC Works & Woodland Industries' "Hittin the Sand" fundraiser in August. Countless sponsors, car cruisers, boat enthusiasts, and friends from around the Tri-State region came together both on the river and on the road, raising over \$31,000 in an effort to ensure that services to individuals with disabilities continue to thrive in Houston County! It is with grateful hearts that ABC thanks everyone for their generosity & continued support from year to year - together, we make a difference!



Cruisin' the Mississippi at Wildcat Landing



Faithful supporters of "Hittin' the Sand" assemble

Community Partners in Support of ABC

ABC is extremely proud to work with a wide range of organizations in our community for the common good. Following are just a few examples of these partnerships over the last few months:



IBM, HGST and Northwest Mutual Volunteers Support ABC and Ability Built Computers

In celebration of IBM Rochester's "60 Years of Innovation," IBM teamed with the Ability Built Computers program of ABC to distribute 100 free or low-cost computers to individuals and families in our community with limited access to technology. Generous grant funding from IBM enabled many computers to be distributed for free and others at greatly reduced prices. More than 30 volunteer IBMers assisted in the distribution and provided basic computer training to each of the recipients.

Over the summer, groups from HGST and Northwestern Mutual also assisted Ability Built Computers in preparing computer systems for distribution. Some Northwest Mutual volunteers also helped perform various building maintenance tasks throughout ABC.



Clockwise from top left: one of several shifts of IBM volunteers; the Northwest Mutual group; the group from HGST.



Think Mutual Bank Employee Bake Sale Raises \$1,000 for ABC

In October, a group of Think Mutual Bank employees held a bake sale for ABC's programs as part of the organization's "Think Cares" initiative. ABC staff and participants also contributed bake goods for the sale. When all was said and done, the event raised \$1,000 for ABC's and its programs and was a fun (and delicious) way to work together for a great cause. Many thanks to Think and their employees for their initiative and support of ABC! At left: Heidi Campbell of Think Mutual presents a check to ABC's Kenny Bedtka and Bruce Remme.

Paying it Forward

Guy Finne, Human Resources Manager with Mayo Clinic, won a recent drawing for 50 lbs. free shredding from ABC. In turn, Guy donated the prize to Dee Sabol, Executive Director of the Diversity Council-Rochester to support the important work of her organization. Well done Guy and congratulations Dee!



Community Donations

Many have generously supported ABC with donations of equipment or supplies in recent months. These include:

- Water heater for ABC Works LaCrescent
- Copier paper for ABC Rochester from IBM
- Van for ABC Works LaCrescent (partial funding from Minnesota Department of Transportation)
- Van for ABC Rochester from Mayo Clinic
- Recliner for Abilities Unlimited from the Rochester Civitan Club





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Rochester, Minnesota 55903-6938

Change Service Requested



ABC is proud to have renewed its CARF accreditation through 2019!



United Way
of Olmsted County

EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY
EMPLOYER



Ways to Donate

- Donate online at www.abcinc.org
- Write a check
- Donate stock, mutual funds or real estate to ABC
- Name ABC in your will or trust
- Name ABC as beneficiary in your IRA, retirement plan, charitable trust, life insurance policy or annuity
- Name ABC as TOD ("transfer on death") of your accounts
- Donate time by volunteering at ABC
- Advocate the great things ABC does in our community
- Donate to ABC using payroll deduction if your employer provides the option
- Shop online using the Amazon Smile program with ABC as your designated non-profit

For more information on donation options, please contact Laurie Kellagher at (507) 535-7105 or by email at lauriek@abcinc.org.

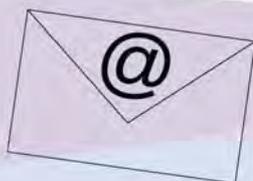


Transportation Update

Earlier this year ABC was fortunate to obtain a new bus for our Houston County locations. While much of the cost was covered by a Department of Transportation grant, ABC is responsible for 20% of the total, or \$12,610. Donations to help us cover this remainder are appreciated and very much needed!

Providing transportation to our participants is an enormous and critical part of our day-to-day services.

Currently we have 22 vehicles at our main site and an additional 12 vehicles shared among three Houston County locations.



Don't Get Left Out - Update Your Email!

ABC will rely more heavily on electronic communications in the coming months. Please visit <http://www.abcinc.org/support/maillinglist.html> to make sure we have your current email address on file.