The Quarterly Newsletter of Ability Building Center — Summer 2018

Message from the Director

by Bruce Remme, Executive Director

These are challenging times for all disability service providers, including ABC. We have been faced with legislative mandates, policy changes, and most recently funding cuts set to go into effect on July 1. Thanks to the leadership of MOHR (Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation) and all of you who joined in the grassroots efforts to “Stop the 7% Cut,” our voices were heard and the Omnibus Supplemental Budget bill passed both the State House and Senate. Unfortunately, due to bi-partisan issues, the session ended with Governor Dayton vetoing the bill.

As of this writing the funding cut is set to be enacted July 1. Action is being taken by MOHR seeking legal action and an injunction to stop the cut from going into effect.

On a more upbeat note, you will see many positive, uplifting stories in this newsletter all centered on celebrating abilities one person at a time!

Our most recent golf event, On the Tee with ABC, was another huge success. Thank you to all the Sponsors and 131 golfers who joined us for a day of beautiful weather, great food and fellowship, and some amazing golf at the Rochester Golf and Country Club.

We are a people business, it takes funding and support to advance our mission. Community support is of utmost importance during these times. The people of ABC deserve this support and are deeply grateful for it. THANK YOU!

ABC to Host AbilityFest in July

ABC is hosting its first ever AbilityFest this July. There will be tours of the facility, a DJ to spin music, yard games, and food trucks. It is a free event open to the community.

The idea for AbilityFest came about when ABC staff members Emily Ellingworth, Hannah Giehtbrock and Tori Nelsen realized that many of ABC’s events are hosted off-site. They discussed having a community awareness event to show off the facility and celebrate everyone who works at ABC. With those vital concepts in mind, AbilityFest was created.

Check out the event on Facebook for specific details on music, food and more. Join us in the fun as we celebrate ABC, our participants, staff and community.

More on “Stop the Cut”

More information on the “Stop the 7% Cut” initiative is available online from MOHR at www.mohrmn.org. The Post Bulletin (http://www.postbulletin.com) and KTTC (http://www.kttc.com) recently ran feature articles on the issue — these are available online from their respective web sites.
“Having Fun and Making Friends” best describes the Options to Work program underway this summer for program participants at ABC Works! Everyone served is welcome to participate in a variety of community outings and activities!

On the first work day of each month, participants meet at 10:00 a.m. to review activities for the month and to give suggestions for activities in the following month. A monthly calendar is posted and program participants have the opportunity to sign up for activities. A bulletin board located in the Rec Room (known as the “IDEA BOARD”) encourages staff & participants to write down suggestions for activities or post community events in the area. A computer in the Rec Room can also be used to access upcoming events nearby. Participants are able to take part in individual activities as well as group activities tailored to their interests.

The monthly activity schedule includes routine activities each month such as senior dining, library, Kaddy’s Kafé, animal shelter, errands (to local stores to pick up needed supplies), post office and Valley View mall. All of these activities provide excellent opportunities for interaction and inclusion with the public. Many times the regular visits to these routine activities foster lasting relationships with community members.

Other activities planned include: pontoon rides, fishing, Myrick Park zoo, Loggers baseball games, hiking, Rainbow Bridge farm, YMCA, Nutrition Site, local festivals, Grandad’s Bluff, Owl Museum, Riverside Park, Black Beach Neighborhood Center, Good Fight Club, Zoo Mobile and bowling.

Staff Launches Sustainability Initiative

by Bethany Gangestad-Birk, Ability Enterprises Operations Coordinator

The newest committee at ABC is all about SustainAbility. It was formed by Emily Ellingworth and Bethany Gangestad-Birk who have a passion for green practices after graduating from the environmentally friendly, University of Minnesota-Morris in 2016.

“We had been talking about making a committee for months” Bethany recalls. “Then one day we saw too many pop bottles in the garbage can and decided we need to make this happen now.”

Big change can be made with many small actions, which is why this committee is devoted to educating others about sustainable practices and implementing those practices agency-wide to reduce ABC’s carbon footprint. Soon there will be info-graphics placed around the buildings and emailed out to staff to let everyone know what changes they can make to be more sustainable. Other tasks the committee will be working on include placing more recycling bins in center, monitoring light usage to save energy, and using plastic bags as a material for weaving.

The committee encourages participation by both staff and participants. The SustainAbility Committee meets bi-monthly and is open to all interested.
With your support, our annual golf tournament on June 4 raised $64,745 for ABC programs and services. Thank you for your commitment — it’s what gives us that extra boost we need to fulfill our mission!

Abilities Integrated Builds Skills through Summer Fun

Abilities Integrated is a new community integrated summer program designed to enhance individuals’ skills. The program started on June 11th and runs through the end of August. ABC has partnered with local businesses to set up a weekly schedule for the 11 individuals in the program. Some of their volunteer opportunities include operating the Yellow Monkey, fixing fences, painting and working with the horses at RideAbility, and running the dish room at Assisi Heights.

The individuals in this program will learn useful skills over the course of the summer that will help them gain life and job experiences.
TRIBUTES AND MEMORIALS

Alan E. Pedretti

On April 22, 2018 ABC lost a longtime friend and co-worker. Al was born on October 18, 1958 and spent 37 years as an ABC employee. Al was full of energy and worked on various in-center production contracts, excelling at turning retriever dummies. Al also held a job delivering Foxxy Shopper bundles to various locations in the La Crescent community. Al was an educator and trainer to many of our staff. He was always a little quicker, smarter and one step ahead of us all. Al was known for having a great smile, sparkling eyes and chuckling laugh. Al will always be in our memories and part of the ABC family. We will miss you Al, AKA “Snucker Pucker,” “Alvin” and “The Italian Stallion!”

OUR LATEST LOWRY AND WOW WINNERS

Paula Betten

Paula is the recipient of Woodland Industries’ Outstanding Worker Award for Q2 2018. Paula does not hesitate to help out when needed in-center or in the community with a smile. She sometimes works 2-3 jobs in the community on enclaves and works at her crossing guard job daily. We truly appreciate Paula’s positive attitude and leadership!

Chelsea Koop

Over the years, Chelsea has shown exceptional improvement above and beyond her three goals at ABC. Chelsea works hard at her job sites and consistently maintains a positive attitude. She strives to improve her skills and continues to adapt well to changes in her work environment and schedule. Congratulations Chelsea on your Lowry Award!

Bret LeMay

Bret has made considerable progress towards reaching his goals. He has shown great flexibility in trying new jobs, covering at the last minute and in changing his work schedule when needed. Bret demonstrates a great attitude while at work and is one of the most polite and courteous people you will meet. Bret is a great role model for those around him!

RETIREMENTS

Gary Rubin

Gary started his employment with ABC in 2007 as an Extended Employment job coach. His plan was to stay one year before retirement. Ten years later, Gary has finally decided to retire. He has been an inspiration to many during his time with ABC; his compassion, work ethic, dedication to ABC’s mission and positive attitude will never be forgotten. The impact he has made on the individuals he has worked with served by ABC will be lasting.

Rena Kruse

Jean Middendorf

Geri Schroeder

Congratulations and a Huge Thank you go out to Rena Kruse, Jean Middendorf and Gerri Schroeder! All three ladies recently retired from ABC Works in Caledonia. Gerri started in May of 1996, Jean February of 2002 and Rena March of 2011. These gals have a combined total of 45 years of dedicated service and job coaching experience! Enjoy your well-deserved retirement Rena, Jean and Gerri — we will miss you!

DID YOU KNOW? ABC was awarded the Best Campaign Coordinator/Team Award by the United Way of Olmsted County at this year’s Celebration of Caring & Giving event!
Qualifying Charitable Distributions (QCDs)

by David J. Stenhaug, CFA (ABC Volunteer)

Many retirees that have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) and age 70 ½ or older are not aware that in lieu of taking their Required Minimum Distribution, they may direct their IRA provider to send some or all of their distribution to their favorite charity or charities. These “qualifying charitable distributions,” (QCDs) are becoming more popular than ever since the law was changed to allow this back in 2006 as a temporary measure. In the intervening years it lapsed and was revived several times. Thankfully in 2015 it was made permanent. It is a powerful incentive to charitable giving.

The requirements for making a qualified charitable distribution are relatively simple. The charitable distribution must be:

- From a traditional IRA or a Roth IRA;
- Direct from the IRA trustee to the charitable organization;
- On or after the IRA owner has reached age 70½; and
- A contribution to an organization that qualifies as a charitable organization, other than a private foundation or donor advised fund.

There are many potential benefits for making charitable contributions from your IRA. Probably the most important is that, under the new Federal tax law that takes effect in 2018, the “standard deduction” has increased dramatically, and as a result more individuals than ever will not need to itemize via Schedule “A” on their tax return. Thus the amount of donation made, via a qualifying charitable distribution from your IRA, avoids the donor’s tax return, and the donor can effectively get both the standard deduction and the charitable contribution deduction. Secondly, it is less likely that some taxpayers will see their Social Security taxed due to the reduction in their taxable income.

Consider making a donation to ABC via your IRA. Consult with your tax preparer or the investment company that holds your IRA with more questions.
Celebrating Abilities 2018

This year featuring “Unmasking Brain Injury in Minnesota.” Experience a one-of-a-kind exhibition of lives behind the masks of disability. Read their stories, see over 200 masks and witness the results of art, therapy and advocacy.

Few people understand the personal impact brain injury can have. Its effects often are subtle and difficult to express. In March of 2016, the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance began the Unmasking Brain Injury in Minnesota project to help individuals affected by brain injury design masks to communicate their unique perspectives and altered outlooks. ABC is proud to partner with the Alliance to bring the project to Rochester for Celebrating Abilities 2018.

Behind each mask is a person that’s been touched by brain injury as a survivor, parent, sibling, friend, neighbor or co-worker. Individual stories of Minnesotans with brain injury will be highlighted along with their masks.

September 13, 2018 • 5-8 PM
Rochester Civic Theatre
Tickets and sponsor info online at abcinc.org!

Visit us online at abcinc.org!

Save the dates — AbilityFest: Fri, July 20, 5-9 p.m. @ ABC, 1911 14th Street NW, Rochester
ABC Community Stakeholder Meeting: Tue, July 24, 6 p.m. @ ABC, 1911 14th Street NW, Rochester
Celebrating Abilities 2018: Thu, Sept 13, 5-8 p.m. @ Rochester Civic Theatre, 20 Civic Center Dr. SE, Rochester
Murder Mystery Scene 2018: Sat, Oct 13, 5 p.m. @ Four Seasons Community Center, Caledonia