ABC improves the quality of life in Southeastern Minnesota by providing rehabilitation and employment services for persons with disabilities and other special needs.
Message from the President & Director

The theme over the past few years has been change — change that this field has not seen in decades. During 2017 we continued to navigate this new reality, while making strategic investments to ensure Ability Building Center (ABC) is well positioned for the future.

We continue to see rapid change at both the State and Federal levels on policies, regulations, and complex funding methods that govern the day services field. ABC’s strategic plan is focused on aligning with these changes, while ensuring fiscal sustainability. This is being done in keeping with our founder’s spirit and our resolute commitment in fulfilling the mission of ABC.

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. The title Project Eagle was inspired by a participant’s drawing with the caption of “ABC Let’s Me Soar Like an Eagle.” 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 Human Resources module. Thanks to the support from the Otto Bremer Trust, Mayo Clinic, IBM, and many individual donations, we were able to complete the project on schedule. Because of the 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.

Overall, staffing continues to be our biggest challenge. With retirements and departures over the past two years, we have seen a 65% turnover in key leadership positions. While this presents a drain of experience and knowledge, it also creates opportunity for career growth and the ability to grow talent from within at all levels in the organization. In 2017, 13 employees were promoted or moved into new positions. However, we continue to experience high turnover and severe staff shortages at the direct care level, which is impacting our ability to accept new referrals and expand services.

Even with the stress and strain in a challenging economic environment, ABC continues to excel at providing a broad range of choices and opportunity for our 753 participants in Southeastern Minnesota.

As you read through the program update, you will find information about the breadth of services Ability Building Center offers, including vocational, residential, independent living, and life enrichment services. However, the real story is the people who are finding employment and life enrichment activities which reflects their choice, developing self-worth, and becoming integrated members of their communities.

We are grateful for the amazing support from the Southeastern Minnesota community. Benefactors, event and fundraising sponsors, business partners and the volunteer community have all been a significant element in our ability to continue providing services to our participants and take care of our staff. YOUR support makes a huge difference at a critical time.

THANK YOU for helping ABC fulfill our mission one person at a time.
DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- ABC received its first grant from the Otto Bremer Trust for $75,000 to transform back office support with new case management software, integrated billing, payroll and a full-function human resources module.
- Ability Building Center received donations of $10,121 from the Rochester Community Development Block Grant to replace the carpeting in the lobby, conference rooms and main administrative area.
- The Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation donated $15,000 as a matching grant for OSHA safety equipment.
- Camp Winnebago donated a used bus at a value of $12,500.
- The University of Minnesota provided $12,175 in staff training for Ability Building Center.
- Our Houston County fundraiser collected $42,830 from donations, sponsorships, and raffle tickets in August.
- The annual ABC golf tournament raised over $62,468 in revenue from golf sponsors, golf registrations, donations and raffle.
- Our Celebrating Abilities event raised $28,833 in its first year. This event featured a screening of the movie, “Learning to Drive,” about a young man with Downs syndrome who wants his brother to help him get his driver’s license.
- Memorial gifts and gifts of recognition in excess of $7,997 were received in the names of friends and loved ones.
- Spectrum Reach provided opportunities for Ability Building Center to air $26,700 in television spots throughout the year promoting program participant’s work abilities. KTTC donated $25,608 in television air time to promote the golf tournament and our 60 years of service. Minnesota 97.5 FM also provided opportunities for Ability Building Center to reach out to the surrounding communities through radio spots.
- Additional contributions to ABC of over $199,371 were received in a variety of forms for use in programs to help improve the quality of life in Southeastern Minnesota by providing vocational and rehabilitative services to people with disabilities and other special needs.

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I reflect on my two years as President of the ABC Board of Directors, two things stand out to me. First, is the commitment of the staff of ABC to provide the best care and support to people we provide services to. My roots are in providing direct care to people who have disabilities, so I know the pains of not having enough staff, needing two jobs to make ends meet and dealing with the prejudice directed towards people we work with. I also know the absolute joy that comes from working with people we provide services to. Staff who work at ABC are truly my heroines and heroes.

Secondly, during the past two years one thing has remained constant, there is always change in this field. Through funding challenges, rule changes, unemployment at an all-time low in this region, policy changes and staffing changes, ABC has remained resilient. This agency always bounces back and becomes better.

ABC’s strength is not only in its staff, but also the support of community members and leaders such as Mayor Ardell Brede, as well as the benefactors who contribute to the mission of ABC and allow this organization to continue the essential work of supporting people with disabilities in our community.

As we go forward, my hope is that ABC will continue to find strength in its staff, people who use its services and the community of people who supports its mission to continue to provide opportunities for people to fulfill their dreams, one person at a time.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve this great organization in such an esteemed role.

Patty Simcox
ABC Board President
Programs Update

Focusing on a person-centered approach throughout the organization

In 2017 ABC provided services to 753 unique individuals through a total of 878 program entries.

ABC served the most participants in Day Training and Habilitation (DT&H) programs. ABC operates DT&H programs at three different locations: Rochester, LaCrescent and Caledonia. There were 243 program participants in 2017: 144 individuals in Olmsted County (Ability Enterprises) and 99 individuals in Houston County (ABC Works). ABC plans to open enrollment into these programs throughout the next year and also provide more opportunities for recreation and leisure opportunities to the aging population.

Supported Employment (SE) is the second largest program area for ABC. Olmsted County had 14 new referrals in 2017 for Supported Employment and served a total of 165 participants throughout the year. Houston County (Woodland Industries) supported 33 participants in SE, 17 of which are paid directly by the employer.

Centered Based Employment (CBE) at the Rochester site had 37 referrals in 2017. Ten referrals were discharged due to lack of participation which resulted from a wide variety of reasons, but unstable mental health was the primary factor. Woodland Industries had one new referral during the year that also resulted in a discharge after three months. There were five additional discharges from Woodland Industries during the year due to participants retiring or moving out of the area. CBE is an attractive option for participants who struggle with attendance, have more limited ability levels, are at retirement age or choose to work part time in the community.

Referrals for Competitive Employment has increased in 2017, with 18 referrals in Olmsted County (five were successfully placed) and eight referrals in Houston County (five were successfully placed).

Vocational Evaluation served 11 participants in Rochester (an increase over 2016). Non-Work Programs in Rochester, Ability Options (AO) served 22 participants and Abilities Unlimited (AU) served 28 participants. Independent Living Skills (ILS)/Semi Independent Living Skills (SILS) served 27 individuals in the Rochester area. ABC looks to expand this type of programming into Houston County in 2018.

Demographics of those served by ABC remained relatively unchanged, as persons served with intellectual disabilities and mental health concerns made up a the largest number served.

Stakeholder satisfaction ranked high throughout services provided by ABC. Overall stakeholder satisfaction for the organization in 2017 was 98%. Services
were ranked high in offering choice, having open communication and helping individuals develop and achieve their goals. Participants noted they are treated with respect, feel safe and enjoy what they do each day. Surveys are distributed throughout the year to program participants, parents, guardians, county case managers and residential providers. In addition, advisory committees also provide input and direction to rehabilitation programming efforts. ABC prides themselves in providing person centered services to each individual in programming.

One of the biggest challenges we face is the acute shortage of direct care staff due to a shrinking pool of potential employees willing to perform physically and emotionally demanding work for a relatively low wage. Staff turnover rates are high, and open positions are common throughout all program areas. Staff turnover was 35% agency-wide and 42% for direct care staff positions.

ABC strives to develop a person-centered tradition that stretches throughout the organization. Every employee of the organization is obligated to act on behalf of the persons we serve and acknowledge that they each, in some formal or informal way, contribute to our stakeholders satisfaction. ABC promotes an environment where stakeholders provide feedback that in turn is used to define the organization’s quality standards. Stakeholders help drive our initiatives and will continue to be our key focus for developing programs and services that meet or exceed their requirements. Identifying and meeting our customer needs is essential to ABC’s success. Listening to our stakeholders and acting on their input is what makes the difference in our successful role of serving persons with disabilities.

In addition to developing their individual plans, stakeholders participate in the overall planning process through advisory committees, the Worker Advisory Group, and the Board of Directors. The advisory committees, Worker Advisory Group provide information and feedback regarding needs, complaints, and gaps in services on an ongoing basis.

In 2017, staff from both our Rochester and Houston County locations completed year one of a three-year University of Minnesota training grant on person-center practices. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) in collaboration with the University of Minnesota’s Research and Training Center on Community Living at the Institute on Community Integration are providing technical assistance to promote person-centered services and positive behavior support. ABC in collaboration with other agencies throughout Olmsted County were granted this opportunity to expand organizational capacity by implementing person-centered and positive culture throughout their organizations. The State continues its efforts in the implementation of Reform 2020 initiatives and the state’s Olmstead Plan, including the Home and Community-Based Services Standards (Minnesota Statute 245(D)), and the implementation of the Positive Supports Rule. As part of these efforts, the Department seeks to promote service planning and delivery to empower the people who receive services, provide staff with an expanded array of skills and competencies, and support agencies in undertaking the larger cultural shifts necessary in their organizational capacities.

The training and technical assistance provided through this project is intended to lay the foundation for an agency to continue cultural changes that may take five to ten years to implement.

In addition, ABC staff began formal training offered through the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) focusing on Customized Employment (CE). CE is a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. It is based on an individualized match between the strengths, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. CE utilizes an individualized approach to employment planning and job development — one person at a time and one employer at a time. ABC will be utilizing this approach to help further community integration of persons served in the areas of independent community employment in addition to educating the business community on how those served by ABC can be the answer to current and future employment needs.

ABC strives to create a culture of inclusion and opportunity for people of diverse backgrounds. ABC works to develop an environment that utilizes everyone’s skills and abilities and allows them to develop new ones. ABC’s efforts are designed to encourage individuals with diverse backgrounds to fully participate in ABC’s programs and activities.
A New Era for Supported Employment

Two success stories from a new approach to supported employment programs

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 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 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 view 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.”

**About Supported Employment**

ABC’s Supported Employment (SE) program is a CARF-accredited initiative designed to assist people in finding and successfully maintaining work outside of Ability Building Center in cooperation with community businesses. Many participants are on the path to independent placement — either ABC-paid or employer-paid work — working in groups or on crews while developing essential skills.

Clients may work in roles as diverse as locker room attendants at a local athletic club, members of a mobile custodial crew assigned to a local school district, document scanners, food servers or electronics testers.

Crew members build skills as they get support and structure from their coaches, other members of the crew, and employees at the businesses they visit. Team members are paid by ABC, but supervised and naturally supported by the staff of the business partner.

The support a participant gets from his or her ABC Job Coach and fellow crew members can be the key to achieving the highest level of independence and success. Some participants may already have the necessary work and social skills, but still benefit from monthly “check-ins” and semi-annual team meetings.

As with all of ABC’s programs, Supported Employment is staffed by professionals dedicated to a person-centered, team-based approach to ensure continued success. Each client’s team may include family, guardians, a social worker, medical or mental health providers, residential staff, an ABC Job Coach and Program Coordinator, and most importantly, the clients themselves.
Thank You!
2017 Benefactors & Contributors

The Benefactors’ Circle was established in 1994 to honor key leaders in the ABC mission. Contributors who give cumulative gifts of $1,000 or more are recognized at five different levels. Listed below are our new Benefactors and those who have achieved a new level of giving in 2017.

New Benefactors 2017

$25,000 Gold Level
WA Insurance Group
Jerry & LeeAnn Zubay

$10,000 Silver Level
AI & Thelma Cutaia
Bigelow-Lennon Construction
Jon & Laurie Claeyts
Dahl Home Builders
Olmsted Medical Center
Rochester Civitan Club
Rochester Golf & Country Club
Dave & Sara Stenhaug

$2,500 Bronze Level
Associated Textile Mills
Roger & Lois Carlson
Dallas & Sharyl Herrick
Julie Lower
Arlysse MacGillivray
Metafile Information Systems
Minnesota 97.5 FM
Minnesota Autism Center
Sadler Family
Loren & Donna Walters

$1,000 Blue Level
Rob & Heidi Alberts
Atlas Insurance Broker
Bethel Lutheran Church
Bremer Wealth Management
Ron & Sally Bymers
Charlie’s Eatery & Pub
Costco Wholesale
Paul Dorn
Dover Fire Relief Association
Enterprise Fleet Management
Erin Rope Corporation
Brian & Margaret Fasbender
Thomas Fitzgerald

2017 Contributors
Names in bold are benefactors.

A & S Clothing
ABLE
Fardowsa Abukar
Accord Electric
Acentek
Adamson Motors
Bob Adamson
AgVantage Software
Jeff Amaris
AmazonSmile Foundation
American Legion Auxiliary
American Legion Post 423
Stephanie Anders-Folstad
Swede & Jan Anderson
Anonymous
Charles Applegate
Peggy Armstrong
Bill & Jodi Armstrong
Mary Aronin
Associated Bank
Augedahl Construction
Arlene Augedahl
Vernon Augustson
Badger Corrugating
Dave Bahr
Bob & Jan Baier
Bank of the West
Jan Bauman
Bear Creek Services
Ray & Mary Beard
Sharon Becker
Dave & Judy Benda
Claire Bender
Alan & Nancy Bentley
Keith Berge
Tom & Kathy Bergquist
Al Berning
Gerald & Ruth Berns
Tom & Jan Bernstorff
Les Beyer
Marian Bicknese
Bigelow Homes
Wally & Faye Bigelow
Bluff Country Meats
Bobcat of the Coulee Region
Jeff Boehm
Robert & Charlotte Bomstad
Bonanza Grain
Larry & LuAnn Borst
Borton Construction
Bill & Rita Bourne
Matt & Mel Bowen
Bowlcity
Fran & Mary Bradley
Tim Brandt
Gordon & Kathleen Branes
Breyers Sales and Service
Donald & Mary Brouillard
Terry & Shelly Brown
Mark & Lisa Brueske
Bruce Buller
Mahlon & Marilyn Burbank
Tom & Theresa Burroughs
Allan & Roseusta
Buzzards Bar & Grill
Karin Byers
Byron Pet Clinic
Sharon Cadwell
Caledonia Car & Rehab
Caledonia Haulers
Caledonia Lumber Company & Construction
Caledonia Oil Company
Caledonia Wheel Alignment
Camp Winnebago
Jane & Mary Campion
Cantteen
Cardinal of Minnesota
Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation
Ronald Carlsen
Bob & Bette Carson
Robert & Yvonne Carson
Casablanca Creative Cuisine & Wine
Castaways on the Island
Dan & Edith Castrodale
Catgut Marina
Charter Communications
Jim & Joan Clark
Russell & Denise Clark
Mr. & Mrs. Wesley Clark
AUDITED FINANCIALS

### Financial Statement

**Revenue:**
- Trade Sales & Community Contracts: $4,131,522
- Program Service Fees: $8,179,566
- Contributions: $524,244
- United Way Allocations: $73,787
- Investment Income: $151,063
**Total Revenue:** $13,060,182

**Program Services Expenditures:**
- Vocational Development: $59,469
- Center Based Employment: $3,924,413
- Ability Enterprises: $2,896,965
- Abilities Unlimited: $397,643
- ABC Works: $2,724,777
- Community Based Employment: $1,793,278
**Total Program Services:** $11,795,545

**Supporting Services:**
- Management and General: $1,104,499
- Development: $392,231
**Total Supporting Services:** $1,496,730

**Total Expenses:** $13,292,275

### Balance Sheet

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### Board of Directors

Clockwise from left: Jeff Smigielski, Dee Vasquez Sabol, Becca Stiles-Nogosek, Kreg Kauffman, Dick Kerndt, Brad Anderson, Roger Dearth, Hilary Battey. Not pictured: Board President Patty Simcox.

### Locations

**Ability Building Center**
- 1911 14th Street NW
- Rochester, MN 55901
- (507) 281-6262 (phone)
- (507) 281-6270 (fax)
- info@abcinc.org

**ABC Works La Crescent**
- 62 North 3rd Street
- La Crescent, MN 55947
- (507) 895-7161 (phone)
- (507) 895-3969 (fax)
- workslc@abcinc.org

**ABC Works Caledonia**
- 730 North Pine
- Caledonia, MN 55921
- (507) 725-2057 (phone)
- (507) 725-8469 (fax)
- workscal@abcinc.org

**Woodland Industries**
- 521 Old Highway Drive
- Caledonia, MN 55921
- (507) 725-2092 (phone)
- woodland@abcinc.org
As ABC focuses on its mission, we honor the legacy of our founders who blazed a new path — breaking down barriers for those with disabilities and special needs.

The ABC Founders’ spirit epitomized by individuals such as...

Fred Kennedy  Elizabeth Lowry  Kenneth Zubay  Anna McGee  Thomas Murray

...is alive and well today!

Celebrating abilities ONE PERSON at a time!