ABC and People’s Food Co-op

by Lynda Kusienko, Employment Specialist

Since opening its doors in Rochester in 2013, The People’s Food Co-op (PFC) has partnered with ABC to fill positions in their store with contract work. The ABC/PFC partnership has been one of the most powerful demonstrations of what our participants can achieve with a supportive employer.

The Co-op team, led by Store Manager Karla Meyer, has been working hard the past year to develop creative solutions for matching workers skills’ with lasting opportunities.

In August Mitch Bentley and Amy Renken were the latest from ABC to be offered positions with the Co-op. Both have held their positions for several years. Amy is a dishwasher in the main kitchen two days a week (Karla would love to have her more!) and Mitch works in the deli as a dishwasher. Mitch has also recently learned new tasks in the dining and buffet areas.

Karla stated, “It has been a real pleasure working with the participants from ABC over the past five years. We are really excited to welcome aboard several onto our team!”

Independent Living Skills (ILS) Program Expands

by Judy Johnson, Director of Programs for Houston County

ABC is now providing Independent Living Skills (ILS) services for people living in Houston and Fillmore Counties. The purpose of this program is to provide customized training and assistance to adults and children to develop and achieve independence in their communities. Examples of supports provided include household organization, leisure and recreation activities, community access and awareness, personal appearance and hygiene, nutrition, meal planning and cooking, grocery and personal shopping, arranging transportation, money management, social skills, pet care, self-advocacy, networking and learning, and exercising rights and responsibilities.

We received our first referral in April of this year and are now serving 11 individuals. Most individuals receive approximately six hours per week of support tailored to their individual needs. ABC is very excited to expand our programming to provide this important service to new areas in southern Minnesota!
PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: The Yellow Monkey

by Kristen Lynne, AE/AI Program Manager

When I tell people that ABC volunteers at The Yellow Monkey the most common reaction I get is “What’s that?” If you haven’t heard of The Yellow Monkey, you are missing out! The Yellow Monkey is a local store that was opened by Cindy Rigotti in 2017. Cindy, who has a child with a disability, opened the store with the intent of providing work and volunteer opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The store refurbishes used items, makes them look fantastic, and sells them for a decent price. Individuals that volunteer are able to learn how to paint and refurbish items, merchandise, work a register, and gain customer service skills.

The Yellow Monkey first partnered with Abilities Integrated (AI) this past summer, offering volunteering opportunities to individuals in the program.

The Yellow Monkey is a favorite amongst the Abilities Integrated group. “I really like volunteering at The Yellow Monkey, I am able to run the store and be treated like an employee,” said Ryan Stack, AI Participant.

Want to check out The Yellow Monkey? Stop by anytime during the school year on Wednesday or Friday mornings (9-11 a.m.) to see the Abilities Integrated crew hard at work. For a full list of store hours, visit the Yellow Monkey Facebook page or follow them on Instagram.

Charter House Gift

This year marked the 30th year that the Mayo Clinic’s Charter House retirement community held their annual sidewalk sale. This year ABC was among four nonprofits to receive a $2,000 gift.

The first item purchased was a swing for persons with sensory needs. Swinging has many benefits: building balance and coordination, boosting moods, calming people down, strengthening muscles and increasing focus.

The remaining funds will be used to purchase other sensory items such as weighted blankets, optic lamps, fidget spinners, and koosh balls. Thank you Charter House for your generous donation!

Secret Santas Needed!

by Stephanie Anders-Folstad, AU Coordinator

Each year ABC reaches out to their community members to become Secret Santas to individuals in our Abilities Unlimited program. This year we are hoping to recruit 75 Santas. Each Secret Santa will receive the first name of an individual and things that interest them. You will get to know their favorite color, snack, hobby, etc. You would then buy four small gifts and deliver them to ABC to brighten someone’s holiday season.

If you are unable to go shopping, or shopping is not your thing, you may sponsor a participant for $20.00 and staff will go shopping for their gifts.

For more information or to sign up, please call me at 507-535-3711 or e-mail stephaniea@abcinc.org.

Happy (early) Holidays and I look forward to hearing from you!!!
ABC IN ACTION

Celebrating Abilities 2018

For the second annual Celebrating Abilities, ABC partnered with the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance to present *Unmasking: Brain Injury in Minnesota* at the Rochester Civic Theatre. With your support, the event raised over $32,000 for ABC programs! Thank you to all who attended and to our sponsors and supporters who made the event possible: Canteen, John & Marcine Forrette, Charlie’s Eatery & Pub, Marco, Dover Fire & Rescue, Minnesota 97.5, Custom Alarm, Kauffman Law Firm, DAV, ICR, Zumbrota Ford, Craig & Laurie Kellagher, Bruce & LuAnn Remme, Mid American Convention Service, Anton & Christina Welke, Nancy’s Home & Garden Extravaganza, Deb Gearhart, Richard Hanson, Harry Nevling, Telin Transportation Group, Kiwanis Sunrisers, J-Rocks Auto Glass, Tom & Jane Cummings, Randal & Nancy Vollertson, Marlys Wagner, Bowlcity, BPoE DOES #19, Darrell’s Muffler Shop, Famous Daves, Guesthouse Inn & Suites, Ironwood Springs, Olive Garden, Perkins, Rochester Athletic Club, Robyn Watts, Casablanca Cuisine & Wine, Sam Anderson, and Rochester Flute Choir.

AbilityFest 2018

Thank you to everyone who attended AbilityFest 2018, an awareness event for the community to learn about ABC and its work in the community. A special thank you to DJ Matt, Hog Thai, BB’s pizza and Little Thistle for helping make this event a success. Another big shout out to KAAL’s Betsy Singer for making a guest appearance. Last, but not least, thank you to ABC participants and staff for all the hard work you do here at ABC!

Direct Support Professionals Week

ABC hosted Rochester Mayor Ardell Brede for a proclamation ceremony declaring the week of 9-15 September 2018 “Direct Support Professional Week” in the city of Rochester. Representatives from Cardinal, Hiawatha, Bear Creek, Arsys, adapta, REM, Possibilities, ARC of Minnesota and local media outlets were in attendance (see the feature online at KTTC.com). The proclamation is in recognition of all DSPs in our community and the amazing impact they have on changing lives each and every day. THANK YOU to all ABC DSPs, Job Coaches, Job Coach and Production Supervisors, Drivers, Program Coordinators, and all who provide direct care. YOU ALL are the inspiration that continues to fuel the energy for fulfilling our mission. I continue to be amazed by your passion and caring spirit. “You are awesome because awesome is what you do”, THANK YOU for all you do!! (Executive Director Bruce Remme).

Summer Fun with ABC!
Abilities Integrated Expands

by Kristen Lynne, AE/AI Program Manager

This past summer ABC launched a new program called Abilities Integrated (AI). AI started as a summer program, focused on transition-aged individuals (18-24) that were interested in gaining job skills over the summer months. The program was a hit and served 11 individuals. Through launching the program, it was learned that individuals of all ages were interested in participating the program, so we opened up admission to serve individuals of all ages.

Due to popular demand, we have decided to continue Abilities Integrated year-round. The program will be adding a variety of new community partners so that the individuals involved can gain new skills and develop more natural supports in the community. Some of the new partners include Ironwood Springs, Grace Communion Church, Channel One, and Caring Partners Day Program. We will be continuing partnerships with the ReStore, the Rochester Public Library, and the Yellow Monkey. A special thank you to Judy and Jim Sloan and Camp Winnebago, who donated start up funds for this program.

Abilities Integrated will serve a smaller group this school year so that they can focus on quality supports and skill building for the individuals in programming. If you know of any volunteer opportunities that may be a good fit for the group, please contact Kristen Lynne at Kristenl@abcinc.org.

NEW BOARD MEMBER: John Caldwell

John is Senior Commercial Lender with Bremer Bank who started his career in 1994. He has deep experience and expertise in business banking, commercial lending and credit operations.

After graduating from St. Cloud State University, he had the opportunity to live and work in Sacramento, CA until 2003, when he returned to St. Cloud and met his wife Shelly in 2008. They have lived in Rochester for the past five years and have enjoyed being part of the vibrant community.

John is also on the Board of Directors and Finance Committee for The Reading Center/ Dyslexia Institute of MN. In his free time John enjoys officiating high school and college football, golfing, and traveling to warm climates during the winter months.

Woodland Industries Receives Memorial Gift

Woodland Industries would like to say a special thank you to Carol McCabe of Brownsville, MN. The McCabe family are strong supporters and advocates of ABC. Carol’s husband, Jim, passed away on March 5, 2018. Their wishes were to donate the memorials to ABC Woodland Industries. The memorial money was used to replace a 30-year-old refrigerator, as well as obtain a lift to help support individuals more in their mobility needs. Carol and Jim’s son, Mike worked at Woodland Industries for several years before his passing on May 6th, 1996. ABC Woodland Industries is very appreciative of Carol’s generosity and that of her two boys, Dan and Bill.

Dylan learns about building fences at RideAbility.
TRIBUTES AND MEMORIALS

Andrew Beyer

Andrew “Walker” Beyer passed away on August 21st, 2018. Andy was born with Down syndrome, a congenital heart defect, a form of leukemia, and a life expectancy of a few days. Despite that bleak prediction, Andy proceeded to laugh his way through 49 happy and hilarious years! He was a proud employee of Ability Building Center for over 30 years, where he won the prestigious Lowry Award. Andy’s talents were most recently deployed to Olive Garden where he was able to use both skills and his undeniable charm in a job he loved. He wrung every bit of fun out of each moment and roped everyone he could into the adventure. Andy was a “fun magnet.” If you knew him for five minutes you were a friend for life. Andy will be missed every day by his friends and co-workers at ABC. (Chris Gillard).

Tommy Siggelkow

Our friend and co-worker, Tommy Siggelkow passed on July 29th, 2018. He was inspiration to all who knew him, in part because of his outstanding work ethic, but also for his awesome smile. The smile that made his eyes crinkle came from his heart, and made you smile right back. Tommy found joy and satisfaction working every single day. He much preferred to work and stay busy than engage in any leisurely activity or outing. We will miss him greatly. (Cheryl Wempner).

OUR LATEST LOWRY AND WOW WINNERS

Ricky Goetzinger

Ricky Goetzinger was chosen to be the fourth quarter’s Woodland’s Outstanding Worker. Ricky has worked at La Crescent Animal Care since 2009, and is a valued member of their team. He is very dependable and always has a positive attitude. Ricky is a hard worker and does very well juggling his work schedule and participation in Special Olympics events.

Arne Hoven

Arne has shown great success working independently at the Rochester Athletic Club and Dan Abrams Healthy Living Center. He continues to learn new jobs and continuously demonstrates great flexibility when asked to work extra days. Arne is a great role model to all at ABC and deserving of the Lowry Award.

Jeff Lemke

Jeff has excelled in all aspects of work since he starting on the evening crew at Benchmark. Jeff has made phenomenal strides on his attendance, with a perfect record in the most recent quarter. He continues to show consistency in his work quality and completes as much work as possible. Jeff is a model employee each and every day.

STAFF RETIREMENTS

Bonnie Miller

Bonnie Miller started as a job coach at ABC in 2014. Her eye for detail and drive for productivity has helped her and her crew at the People’s Food Co-op excel through the years. It is not “all work and no play” for her and her crew — she is known to brighten up days with Santa hats around the holidays and joining on outings to the Spam Museum. Bonnie encouraged hard work and dedication to her crew members all with a smile on her face. It is difficult to see her go, but we wish her luck with all the future has in store for her.

Joanne Grethen

Joann Grethen started at ABC on June 5, 2006, in Ability Enterprises, working one-on-one with participant Kay Loftus. Together they worked at IBM sorting silverware and cleaning tables in the employee cafeteria. They also enjoyed many different leisure activities each afternoon. Joann set a fine example through her professional and conscientious view of her job — she was a great representative of ABC!

Sharon Spencer

After being with ABC for 12 years, Sharon has retired in order to focus on her family. She held multiple roles over the years, her most recent and cherished being a Job Coach at DAHLC for six years. Sharon spent her time encouraging the people around her to do the best they can and spreading kindness to everyone.
**Murder Mystery Scene 2018**

You are invited to join fellow partners in crime at The Four Seasons Center in Caledonia, MN on Thursday, October 13, 2018, at 5:00 p.m. for a party that’s full of murder, mystery, and mayhem.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to solve a murder (or two) and at the same time help support ABC programs in Houston County.

We want you to be fully involved in the experience so please come in costume! We’re taking you back to 1930. Become a flapper or a Mafia gangster. Make up a name for yourself. Dress the part. It’s optional of course, but it will enhance your whole experience. Use your imagination and get ready to play!

Who among you will become a cold-blooded killer? Be warned and beware, it could be the person standing right next to you! More information and tickets available online at [www.abcinc.org](http://www.abcinc.org)!