Thank You ABC Board of Directors!

by Bruce Remme, Executive Director

For any Nonprofit entity, the Board of Directors plays a critical role in the governance and oversight of the organization. At ABC we are very fortunate to have an engaged and committed Board of Directors who are passionate about the people and mission of ABC. They are volunteers from across the communities we serve dedicating their time, talents, and professional expertise. I am personally grateful for the support and contribution of our Board.

Recently we held our Annual Meeting where we reviewed our 2018 results and social impact across southeast Minnesota. As we reflect on all that we have accomplished, 2018 will go down as a pivotal year in our transformation journey. The Board has played a key role in this journey, by setting the strategic direction and supporting the culture change that is underway. We owe them a big THANK YOU for all they do!

At the Annual meeting we recognized and thanked Patty Simcox for her many years of service as a Board member, past president, and committee member. We also welcomed two new Board members, Brian Rotty and Judy Tollefsrud. You can check out the current Board members and backgrounds on our web site https://abcinc.org/about/board-of-directors/. When you have an opportunity, please thank them for their service.

It’s Fresh Thyme for ABC

By Jennifer Cayetano, Employment Specialist

As residents of Rochester and surrounding communities patiently waited for Fresh Thyme to open on January 8, 2019 Dylan Larson and Kenny Macon were preparing to start their first job as bagger/cart attendant. Dylan and Kenny applied for this position through RAIL and Vocational Rehabilitation contracted with ABC to provide job coaching. Job coaches Jennifer, Mia, Corey, Ashley and Ginny worked with Dylan and Kenny to help learn their job responsibilities.

Dylan wanted to tell all the job coaches that helped him at Fresh Thyme “I have reached my goals thanks to their help. I love working at Fresh Thyme.”

Michelle, Fresh Thyme’s front end manager, stated “Dylan and Kenny are a part of our team. They are developing great customer service skills and work very well with coworkers and the customers.”

“We’re so proud to have the opportunity to hire students from ABC here in Rochester. Their can-do attitudes and positive outlook have enhanced our customer service and shoppers’ in-store experiences. We look forward to continued involvement with the organization and are grateful to have workers like Kenny and Dylan in our store.”

— L.J. Gearhart, Store Director

Jackie, Kenny’s Mom, stated “We are so grateful that they are there to assist him with the transition to a new job and I appreciate everything they do to prepare him for the position. Fresh Thyme has been a great place for him to work because the management and staff are so kind and understanding. We feel very blessed that they have given him this opportunity! Thank you ABC and Fresh Thyme!!!”

Dylan (in green at left) and Kenny (in green at right) at work at Fresh Thyme.
DAY AT THE CAPITOL

This year’s annual Disability Day at the Capitol occurred on Tuesday, March 12th. Ability Building Center, Adapta, ARSYS, Bear Creek Services, Cardinal of Minnesota, Hiawatha Homes, PossAbilities and SMB Homes joined together to help represent Southeastern Minnesota at the State Capitol. This was a day long event full of advocacy for individuals with disabilities to support their needs to live the best life possible.

Over 1,000 people took part in the rally at the rotunda, where they chanted about the need to give our Direct Support Professionals a livable wage. After the rally was over, the Southeastern Minnesota group 100+ advocates fit into a conference room in the State Senate building where they met with David Senjem, Carla Nelson, and Nels Pierson to discuss the wage disparities for our Direct Support Professionals face. They were able to discuss these issues with Tina Liebling and Duane Quam via conference call.

On the bus ride back to Rochester, the group made it clear that this day was just a starting point for getting their voices heard. This is an ongoing battle during the time of this workforce crisis.

At the time of this writing a version of the Best Life Alliance bill was included in Governor Walz’s proposed budget. Thank you for your advocacy and support to increase the wages for our Direct Support Professionals!

TRIBUTES AND MEMORIALS

Jerome Gilson

On February 4, 2019 ABC Works lost our own man in black. Jerome was born August 26, 1950 and grew up working the family farm in Dorchester Iowa. Jerome came to ABC in his retirement years but still had a strong work ethic and continued to hold a job at West Salem Subway. Jerome was country at heart and loved dressing in black, donning cowboy boots, belt buckle and a ten gallon hat. Jerome loved animals, muscle cars, motorcycles, his guitar, country music, woman and fishing. Jerome was a generous man at heart, full of stories and life experiences. He enjoyed his friends and was quick with a smile and laugh. We will also remember his spark and mischief side, always trying to live his life to the fullest.

Owen Wilbert Schudt

In the history of ABCWorks, there was no truer farmer amongst us than Owen Wilbert Schultd! Throughout his 37 years at ABCWorks (Networks/DAC), Owen often reminded us that “Chickens bite” and that if we didn’t watch ourselves, he would “Put us in the barn all night.” When not working, Owen could often be found looking through farmer’s magazines, hopping on a bus to head to the nearest implement to check out the tractors, or talking to us about farm animals & farm operations. Owen’s fondness for both animals and children was quite evident in the jobs and activities that he chose to do here at ABC – Amongst his favorites were: working at The Barking Lot where he watered the dogs, his weekly trip to the Sales Barn to watch the auction sales & have a Spring Grove (Orange) soda, and his time spent at St. John’s School, helping in the Library & with reading activities in the 1st & 2nd grade classroom.

Owen also loved to collate flyers, crush cans, work on buttons, & shred paper– he had a great work ethic and an even better peanut smile! Owen will always be remembered as a gentle man with a kind heart, who taught us all to enjoy the little things in life – after all…these end up being the BIG things. We will miss you Owen, but your memory will live on in all those “little things.”
SustainAbility Committee Update

Implementing sustainable practices in the work place is a group effort. At least, that is what the 10 members of ABC’s SustainAbility Committee have found.

In the year since the group formed, they have made a great progress in moving ABC to more sustainable practices. They started by simply informing the organization about the efforts each person can individually take, like recycling their plastic bottles and aluminum cans. They team did this by placing infographics around ABC. It was quickly noticed that every one that works at ABC wanted to do their part and recycle, but the access to recycling bins was limited to only a couple areas throughout the building. With this in mind, the team was able to acquire properly labeled recycling bins and place them all throughout the building so that they were accessible for everyone. There are noticeably fewer recyclable items in the garbage cans now.

Other successful projects the team has completed include:

• Co-hosted a Bring Your Own Mug event with the FUN team to show the benefits of using reusable mugs compared to disposable.

• Received grant funds from People’s Energy Cooperative to purchase and install a water bottle filling station in the cafeteria. This has saved the agency over 3,000 disposable water bottles so far!

• To celebrate Earth Day in April, Jim Whiting Nursery and Garden Center donated a Maple tree that was planted in the front of ABC.

• Both individuals and staff had groups participate in Rochester’s A Litter Bit Better initiative in early May. Through this effort Thrivent donated $2,800 worth of LED lightbulbs.

The group has worked hard to make important changes for the organization and there is still plenty more to do!

How can you help?

Donate your reusable kitchenware to ABC – as the organization moves towards sustainability, we are eliminating our use of disposable kitchenware (i.e. cups, silverware, plates, and bowls). To make this change, we are in need of reusable kitchenware.

Have ideas? We would love to hear them! Contact Bethany Gangestad-Birk at bethanyg@abcinc.org or Eric Kelly at erick@abcinc.org

Floating Along with ABC

By Jane Kreidermacher

In late 1988, I was hired by ABC in Rochester. About the same time my family started J & J Parade Floats and it’s been a match made in heaven ever since.

Donating a float to ABC for Rochesterfest has allowed many individuals share with the community what we are all about at ABC. It’s been a win-win for both ABC and the business. Each year one almost has to do a rock, paper, scissors to see who gets to drive the ABC float. Why? The friends I’ve had driven when I was walker with the group or unavailable love to see the smiles and pride each person carries. For me personally I love working with the parade – the Monday after there are individuals wanting to know if there will be a float for next year and can they be in it.

The float donation may not seem a lot, but it has allowed my family a way to give to ABC. Keep an eye out for ABC at the RochesterFest Parade on June 29th this year!

ABC Staff showing off the trash they collected for A Litter Bit Better.
NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Brian Rotty

Brian Rotty, Executive Director Mayo Foundation. Brian is a Health Care Business Administrator for the Mayo Foundation based out of Lacrosse WI. He has a deep background in health solutions, health care plans, strategic and operational planning. He is a retired Army officer and has served on the Board of Directors for Hiawatha Homes Inc. Brian is excited to bring his professional experience and his passion his for serving people to the ABC team.

Judy Tollefsrud

Judy Tollefsrud is a long time resident of Houston County with an extensive background in the disability field having worked at ABLE and as a past ABC Board Member. Judy is currently a tax professional with H&R Block. She has recognized the need and importance of having board representation from Houston Co and is excited to be re-joining the ABC team.

Meet Brenda Whitemore

Brenda started at ABC Works in La Crescent December of 2007.

Since that time Brenda with the assistance of a coach has done a variety of different jobs. She has worked at Subway in Winona, The La Crescent School and for 10 years cleaned at Merchants Bank.

In December of 2018 Brenda was offered a job at Taco Johns as a Direct Hire. Brenda is now independent at this job and loves her new hours and the staff.

Congratulations Brenda on a job well done. Thank you to Taco Johns for giving Brenda this wonderful opportunity.

ABC’S AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

This is to affirm ABC’s policy of providing equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment in accordance with all applicable laws, directives and regulations of federal, state, and local governing bodies or agencies.

Our organization will not discriminate against or harass any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, familial status, membership or activity in a local human rights commission, or status with regard to public assistance. ABC will take affirmative steps to ensure that all of our organization’s employment practices are free of discrimination. Such employment practices include, but are not limited to, the following: hiring, upgrading, demotion, transfer, recruitment or recruitment advertising, selection, layoff, disciplinary action, termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. ABC will provide reasonable accommodation to applicants and employees with disabilities whenever possible.

ABC will evaluate the performance of our leadership and supervisory personnel on the basis of their involvement in achieving these Affirmative Action objectives as well as other established criteria. In addition, all employees are expected to perform their job responsibilities in a manner that supports equal employment opportunities.

ABC has appointed our Human Resources Director to manage the organization’s Equal Employment Opportunity (“EEO”) program. This person’s responsibilities include monitoring all EEO activities and reporting the effectiveness of the organization’s Affirmative Action program as required by law. The Executive Director will receive and review reports on the progress of the program. Any employee or applicant may inspect ABC’s Affirmative Action Plan and information related to our EEO program during normal business hours. Please contact the Human Resources Director for further information.

Any employee or applicant for employment who believes s/he has been treated in a way that violates this policy should contact either the Human Resources Director or any other leadership representative, including the Executive Director. The organization will take immediate action to investigate and address allegations of discrimination or harassment confidentially and promptly.
**Erin Jacobson**

Erin was awarded the 1st Quarter WOW award! She has worked at Woodland for 20 years on various general production jobs. Her favorite job is shredding. She also works at Quillin’s stocking shelves with supports from ABC Works. Erin has positive attendance and hates to miss work! She is outgoing and friendly and enjoys having fun with her co-workers! In her free time Erin loves to swim and you can often see her roaming around the community in nice weather!

**Wayne Hafner**

Wayne Hafner was chosen to be the 2nd quarter Woodland Outstanding Worker. Wayne has been an important part of Woodlands team since 1995. Wayne is very reliable, rarely missing a day of work. He is ready to work each morning, and loves to stay busy which is apparent in how much work he accomplishes each day. Everyone at Woodland enjoys Wayne’s sense of humor and talking with him about the Minnesota Twins, and Gophers.

**Deb Schreiter**

Deb has grown so much since she started working at ABC in 2007. The amount of work she accomplishes in a day has tripled. She has become more independent recently. She will now get her lunch out on her own as well has get ready to leave by herself. Her peers agree that she is a joy to have around, especially when she sings or dances after a hard day of work.

**Andrew Schnell**

Andrew was nominated by 2 people for this award. They agreed that he has grown to be more flexible in recent years. He is willing to work on later afternoon crews, even if it means getting home a little later than usual. He does a good job at staying on task and making sure he is doing a quality job. If you have met Andrew, you know he is kind to everyone he meets and always has a smile on his face!

**Andre Bingham**

Andre has shown continual growth and flexibility in his time at ABC. The quality and speed of his work are great and always improving. He is willing to help out when needed on a crew or independently. He is a shining example of what it means to be part of team ABC!

**Nathan Schultz**

Nathan has been exceeding his work goals. He has made great gains in his interpersonal and social skills. He has become a leader at his job sites and helps new crew members learn the ropes. His cheerful demeanor and willingness to go above and beyond have made him valuable to his crews.

**Brianna Schumacker**

Brianna has made great improvements toward her goal to be more flexible in the workplace. She is now willing to go to job sites and complete tasks that she is not used to doing. She continues to complete good quality work, be a team player, and keep a positive attitude.

**Torin Roberts**

Torin works hard to accomplish a wide variety of tasks at multiple job sites every week. He is described as efficient, flexible and helpful. He has a positive attitude and takes into consideration what he can do to improve his quality and efficiency at work.
On the Tee with ABC 2019

It’s time to hit the links!

On the Tee with ABC, ABC’s annual golf event will this year be held on Monday, June 3, 2019, at Somerby Golf Club in Byron. As always, all proceeds support ABC’s programs and services.

This year ABC is proud to welcome Think Mutual Bank as the event’s Primary Sponsor!

Thank you Think for your support!

Contact Laurie, Bethany or Crystal at (507) 281-6262 for sponsorship inquires.


On the Tee with ABC

Monday, June 3, 2019
Somerby Golf Club