Welcome Executive Director, Wayne Stenberg!

Wayne Stenberg has had over twenty years of extensive non-profit experience in the Southeastern Minnesota area. He has a demonstrated history of working in non-profit management and recently held the position of Executive Director at Semcac, an award-winning agency. Wayne is also a licensed teacher and retired as a Chief Master Sergeant from the United States Air Force. Most recently, Wayne has entered into a new journey as our new Executive Director at ABC. Wayne started with us on September 4th and has already been on quite the journey. In the first few weeks he showed the ABC staff that he is ready to dive in, quite literally. By volunteering for the dunk tank at Celebrating Abilities Septemberfest and attending local networking events, like the Mayors Breakfast, Wayne has shown that he is ready for the adventure that is ABC. He is looking forward to being part of the Rochester community and is thankful to be a member of the ABC team.

“I truly believe in the work of ABC and have already witnessed the strong connection to the surrounding community. Being part of this group of people is an amazing experience and I hope to build on the current momentum that has been created at the agency. The Leadership Team has done an outstanding job of paving the way to the future.”

In his spare time, Wayne enjoys his family, visiting with friends and attending community events. “Fall is one of my favorite seasons and I thoroughly enjoy the apples, changing colors, pumpkins and fall celebrations.” Join us in wishing Wayne a big ABC welcome as he settles into his new position as the Executive Director.

What are Individualized Employment Services?

Formerly known as Vocational Development Services (VDS), Individualized Employment Service (IES) was restructured in the Fall of 2018 in ABC’s continuing effort to shift a higher focus onto competitive, integrated employment. This department went from one staff to four: Program Manager (Keisha Diephuis) and three Employment Coordinators (Jennifer Cayetano, Mia-Falconer-Smith & Lynda Kuscienko). The IES department and two staff members at our Houston County locations focus on traditional methods of job placement, and go through certification for Customized Employment, which focuses on the Discovery process and Customized Job Development.

Not all individuals who are referred to ABC require enclave or in-center placement, and would be referred directly to the IES department for placement services, Discovery, job tryouts and/or skills evaluations. The primary referral source is Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), but individuals who are either already working with ABC in another capacity can be referred directly for placement services as well.

Discovery is a new service that ABC has recently begun to offer, with three out of the four IES staff currently certified to provide that service. “For individuals with more significant barriers to employment, the Discovery process can open up many potentials for competitive integrated employment that may not have been previously thought of.” said Sarah Timmerman, ABC’s Director of Program Innovation.
Val Coners

Val was a very social and well liked individual here at ABC. She left an amazing impression on everyone she met. There are not enough words to describe the amazing individual she was and the impact she had on so many. Val will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of meeting and knowing her.

Arne Hoven

During his eight years at ABC, Arne Hoven held many jobs. He enjoyed his work and the people he worked with and everyone enjoyed him. He was a gentle man with a loving and kind spirit who appreciated everything anyone did for him. He was so filled with gratitude for every little thing. Arne reminded all of us how important it is to be kind, giving and grateful. He will be remembered fondly by everyone whose lives he touched.

Mike Peyla

In the many years he spent at ABC, we all learned that he was a seeker of information, always asking lots of questions. Relationships were important to him – family, house staff, ABC staff, peers, and friends. He had a good sense of humor and a belly laugh to go with it. He enjoyed stories about things he did in the past, as he didn’t forget names or events.

Tim Rollie

Tim Rollie worked at ABC since July 24th, 2006 where he had worked in the community competitively, on numerous enclaves and in the Fulfillment area of ABC. Tim was happily married to Elaine Rollie and had many friends at ABC who admired his positive attitude and quality work. He was always up for a challenge and willing to try new things, which was how he got involved in Special Olympics bocce ball last season. Tim’s contagious smile and warm welcomes will be greatly missed.

Laureen Ruppart

Laureen spent over 30 years as an ABC employee. She will always be remembered for gentleness with everyone. Laureen enjoyed quiet days, good stories and soothing music as her favorite ways to spend time with her friends. Laureen had a quiet way of making others feel special and appreciated. A quiet soft pat on the top of your hand and a smile from Laureen let you know that she enjoyed spending time with you.

Ben Van Dang

After twenty three years of employment at ABC, Ben Van Dang, passed away suddenly. Ben was a gentle, hardworking man, who was very grateful to ABC for the staff who worked with him and his coworkers who shared his work life with him. He will be greatly missed.

Meet Our New Lift, Henrietta!

Thanks to YOU we were able to purchase a new lift! Henrietta is used daily to ensure our operations run smoothly. Tom and the rest of the ABC Team appreciate the contributions you made toward Henrietta!
Farewell Bruce Remme

Bruce Remme is a man who can be defined by many words, but the word that sticks out the most is this: Humble. On a day to day basis you can find Bruce helping anyone who asks but if you try and thank him to much he will find a way to flip that thank you right back to you. The warmth in his smile, kindness in his voice and the exemplary leadership that he has brought to ABC these past few years have been exactly what this organization has needed. Although leaving ABC will be a bittersweet goodbye for him, ABC will be set for the future thanks to the passion he has used for the past 4 years. When asked to write something as a goodbye for this exact newsletter, Bruce’s response reminded his communications department just how humble he is which we all love but also … c’mom Bruce. Help us out. So the idea came to ask the Leadership Team. Everyday this team works directly with Bruce and his passion and leadership shines through them. Here is what they had to say…. 

Justin Mathre – “Bruce was one of the leading decisions of why I came to ABC. I remember meeting Bruce and immediately I knew there was something special in the leader this organization had. From the first week on the job, Bruce has been more than just my boss. Bruce has been a leader, mentor, listening post, encourager, I could go on but there aren’t enough things to say about the PERSON Bruce is. I will miss his mentoring ability and encouraging cheerleader style. I will miss his random stops in the day to talk about business, or the Twins, Vikings, Bears, my family, or with the question “How are you feeling about things?” He could always tell when someone just need to talk even if it wasn’t top priority or if he had a tight schedule. He always had 5 minutes to just talk. I wish Bruce nothing but the best in his retirement. I know he will fill up his days with LuAnn at the cabin or chasing around all those grandkids. Good luck Bruce!

Sarah Timmerman – “In the short time that Bruce has been with ABC, he has created a culture of team work, open communication and empowerment. Since day one, Bruce’s genuine compassion and dedication to ABC has been deeply felt and he has demonstrated that each and every day with his interactions with ABC staff and individuals served. There is a quote that I feel truly defines Bruce’s impact on not only myself, but ABC as whole: “True Leaders Don’t Create Followers, They Create More Leaders”. He has not only empowered me to help lead the organization, he has provided ongoing support whenever I have needed it. Whether that is to talk through a situation, bounce ideas around or to simply sit back and listen. He has provided a level of support and encouragement that I have rarely felt from a supervisor. There are many words of wisdom from Bruce that will stay with me, but the ones that I think about most often are: make sure to take time to celebrate the wins, sleep on it before you make a decision and don’t forget to take care of yourself. Congratulations, Bruce! You will always be a part of the ABC family.”

Kellie Wendland - It is nearly impossible to put into words the affect Bruce has had on ABC. He has managed to reshape the organization while never losing touch with how people are feeling about the changes being made. Bruce doesn’t like to take credit for all of the positive changes over the last few years, but the truth is that he was the source of energy that got the entire machine working again. He has empowered me to grow in my role and always encouraged me to be available to my family. Bruce has taught me that there is no such thing as a work life balance, but what he likes to call “work life integration” since our work families and home families often blend together. It’s difficult to imagine ABC without Bruce, but his legacy will live on through the “Team ABC” culture he has worked so hard to build. I am extremely grateful to Bruce and his leadership and will continue to strive to “be like Bruce”; be connected, be thoughtful, be passionate, and be humble. Congratulations, Bruce! You will be greatly missed!

Laurie Kellagher – “I have had the pleasure of working with Bruce for nearly 16 years! Before becoming our Executive Director, he has been a dedicated volunteer as a Board Member since 1995 and Board President from 2004-2005. Bruce was active on the Development Team for most of those years and was Team Chair for several of them. For many years I have functioned as a one person shop. Thanks to Bruce we now have a team to promote and raise money for ABC. What I enjoy most about Bruce is his positive attitude and passion. He cares about each and every person at ABC. Bruce we will miss you dearly, but we know you will not be far away. Enjoy your retirement!”

Judy Johnson – Bruce, You have been promoted to the retirement stage of your life! We enjoyed your creativity in many ways like the naming your plans of action such as Project Eagle & Project Conrivo. We definitely appreciated the “pilot” program that was developed so that our programs down south could continue to wear shorts. Thank you so much for your support at our local banquet hosting as master of ceremonies and your generosity towards our fundraising goals. May all the years ahead bring you great joy and relaxation, enjoy your new found freedom and make the most of it! Congratulations and Best Wishes from Houston County!
We’ve been busy..

Retirements

Thank you for your contributions to ABC over the years! Good luck on future endeavors!

Cindy Andrews  Reenie Doering  Mike Griffin  Peggy O’Brien
Woodland Outstanding Worker and Lowry Award WINNERS

Jeff Landsom

Jeff was chosen to be the fourth quarter Woodland Outstanding Worker. Jeff always comes to work with a smile on his face and always has a great attitude while at work! He is always very polite and willing to help others out when needed, and will do it with a smile. Jeff can come to work each day and put everyone in a “Happy” mood.

Ethan Serfling

Ethan won the Lowry Award because of the progress he has made in taking initiative, co-worker relations and his attitude. Ethan is willing to learn and complete jobs on his own with accuracy and efficiency. He has a positive attitude and continues to work on his communication skills with his job coaches and co-workers.

Joe Kampershroer

Joe is Woodland Industries 3rd quarter Woodland Outstanding Worker! Joe enjoys shredding and does that usually every morning and than spends the rest of his day greeting customers that come into Twice is Nice & taking shirts on and off hangers in the store. Joe has a great work attitude and is very friendly and positive!

Gail Thorson

Gail’s supervisor nominated her for the Lowry Award because she is flexible, her work quality is outstanding, and she is willing to learn new jobs. She is friendly to all of her co-workers and volunteers her time to help with crafts in AO. Gail is a fantastic employee!

Brian Richardson

Brian has made exceptional strides at his worksites! In a 6 month time period, he went from cleaning yoga mats with assistance from a co-worker or job coach to cleaning all kinds of exercise equipment with little assistance. Brian is always polite and positive no matter the situation. He has also grown to advocate for himself more.

ABC Goes LED

The shift ABC has been making to save money and be more sustainable has resulted in an agency wide project: changing all lightbulbs to LED bulbs. Thanks to a generous grant from Thrivent and RPU rebates we have been able to purchase new bulbs for all ABC Building, Rochester and Houston County alike. Jim Fordham (Maintence Supervisor) and Dan Smith (Facilities Manager) have spent countless hours rewiring and replacing all bulbs, which has saved us over $30,000 in installation fees! By switching over to LED bulbs, ABC will save over $10,000 per year in electrical costs!

Special Thank You to Jim and Dan for taking on Project LED!

Jim Fordham (left) and Dan Smith (right) working happily to replace ABC lightbulbs with LED bulbs.
Help Us Celebrate Winter Traditions!

ABC is currently seeking Donations for our Rec-and-Leisure Programs which includes Abilities Integrated, Ability Options, and Abilities Unlimited. These Items will be used for our Winter festivities program where we encompass all traditions in the upcoming season and bring smiles to all the individuals we serve. During the months of November and December we will be offering various activities and fun days to the individuals we serve. We will accept monetary donations or if you would like to buy a specific item for these departments here is a wish list.

- Puzzles (under 100 pieces)
- Activity books
- Family Friendly Group Games
- Board games
- Coloring books
- Sweat shirts (L and XL)
- Gloves
- Hats
- Scarves
- Foam sheets
- Paints
- Paint Brushes
- Canvases
- Construction paper
- Scrapbook paper
- Stencils
- Permanent Markers
- Stickers
- Alphabet Stickers
- Felt
- **Magazine subscriptions (People, Time, National Geographic, Reader Digest, Food Network Magazine)
- Lite Brite and Lite Brite pegs
- Unisex jackets (L and XL)
- Weighted Blanket
- Movies (PG-13 or under)
- Relaxation CD’s
- Markers
- Glue sticks
- Elmer’s glue
- Colored pencils

For more information please contact Crystal Heim at 507-535-3693 or crystalh@abcinc.org