



News from THE WALLACE GROUP

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ProAct, Inc.

For Immediate Release

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JOB CLOSE TO HOME IDEAL FOR ZUMBROTA MAN

Ray Dewitt wouldn't give up on job opportunity with cheese operation inside city's largest employer, Dairy Farmers of America

In an unheated, two story warehousing area of a Zumbrota milk management facility, Zumbrota resident Ray Dewitt repacks 40 pound chunks of cheese in special shipping containers, a process called cheese stripping. It was an uphill battle to get hired as a temporary worker at Dairy Farmers of America (DFA), but Dewitt's determination, with assistance from ProAct, an organization serving people with disabilities, won the day.

Cheese processing is one of many activities at the farmer owned, dairy cooperative. After five weeks packing cheese several days a week, Dewitt said he is excited to "go as far as he can go" on the job. He's on the payroll with the Adecco Employment Agency's Rochester branch, where his determination to succeed was evident in the interview and testing process.

Successful job/page two

Of the three tests used to assess his motivation, reliability and desire to work, Dewitt passed only two. However, his request to retake the test and his near passing score convinced them of his determination. He retook it and passed. Branch Manager Nancy Wortman describes retesting as a standard practice.

Adding to the excitement of starting his job, Dewitt received his driver's license that same week. Living within a mile of DFA makes it an easy drive to work.

The dairy job builds on Dewitt's success and skills with a ProAct enclave work crew at Capital Safety in Red Wing, where he is known for his high quality and productive work habits.

What does this mean to DFA? Plant manager Lucy Schwartz described the company's need for dependable employees. She uses a bell curve to illustrate her need for people with a variety of skills to get tasks done.

"I need individuals who think on their feet, take action and solve problems, and I also need people who will take on very specific tasks that are repeated over and over." Most important to Schwartz, though, is that people show up to work. When trucks arrive at the plant and the products are not ready for loading, every minute means greater fees.

DFA has 130 employees at the facility, where 1.4 million pounds of milk are converted into 140,000 pounds of cheese daily. The 38-year-old cheese plant is the largest employer in Zumbrota.

Successful job/page three

ProAct is headquartered in Eagan and maintains additional sites in Red Wing and Zumbrota. Its mission is to serve individuals, including students who have completed school or post-high school programs, who are experiencing barriers to employment and self-sufficiency due to intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, and other challenges.

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