



SUPPORT LEADS TO LONG TERM JOB



Many have taken a liking to greeter Chris Morgan, left, at Sam's Club, where Membership Manager Cassandra Armstrong has found him to be a pleasant, multi-talented individual.

Many people with disabilities have proven to be among the store's best workers, with consistent reliability and a positive attitude. Chris Morgan at Sam's Club in Eagan fits this bill, and got his start with ProAct's help.

"Did you find everything? Thanks for shopping. Have a good day," says Morgan, who stays two steps ahead, counting items in a customer's cart as they approach him with a receipt. The greeter says it's "game on" when he enters the door at work, and that attitude has drawn kudos from multiple angles. "Everytime I come in and step through the doors I leave all the dramatic stuff outside and just focus on work," he said.

After receiving four customer comment cards in one day, his general manager was amazed. She asked if all of them were his. "Yep," he responded.

Shoppers can read the kudos posted on a board under Morgan's photo. "Extremely helpful ... he's a people person ... Chris met us at the door and helped with our electric cart ... very friendly ..."

The greeter and cart checker is the last person guests see as they push their carts of product out to the large Eagan lot. Morgan makes the last impression a good one, pouring on the friendliness and charm. "I try to keep them happy," he says.

ProAct vocational specialist Deb

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CREATING NEW IMPRESSIONS FOR RIVER CITY'S PUBLIC SERVICES

The structural center of city government is a place that people expect to shine, and ProAct has moved a cleaning crew and an independent worker in to assist the city of Red Wing with tasks on a five-day schedule.

The retirement of two city janitors left a multi-building void in cleaning operations, creating an opportunity for ProAct to show what was possible.

Before city workers arrive at 8 a.m., ProAct Supervisor Dave Dankers and his team of three clean city hall conference rooms and



They make the seat of Red Wing's city government pleasant and presentable, and cover six additional city buildings. ProAct cleaning crew members include, from left: Rebecca Holden, Jim Torrey, Site Supervisor Dave Dankers and Larry Dietrich (not pictured).

offices, then make their way down to a more elegant and public venue, the public entryway and council chambers. "This is, I would say, one of the most scrutinized (places), very much in the public eye," said Dankers. The lighting, carpet and wood themes in the modern room are more reminiscent of an elegant hotel than the 106-year-old historic building the room adjoins. The team wipes everything down and the council's leather chairs are polished. The port authority also makes use of the room.

"They do a very good job. I've had nothing but good things said about

See Red Wing impact, page 2



A rivertown scene displayed in etched glass greets visitors to the Red Wing Council Chambers, left. The city hall was built in 1906 and was first listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.



WESTERN WISCONSIN HEATS UP WITH NEW WORK EXPERIENCES

Work experiences for people with disabilities are benefiting workers and employers as ProAct spreads its vocational capabilities to a wider area surrounding Hudson, Wis.

Two individuals spent three months working part-time, in Somerset and River Falls, with job coaching assistance and wages paid by the Wisconsin Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Employers got some extra help, and job seekers gain valuable experience.

Dave Johnson, owner of River Falls Ace Hardware, has opened the door for people with disabilities to try working at his store. "It's a great way for people to learn," he said. ProAct client Kevin Gelle stocks shelves, assembles products, cleans and performs other duties. Sometimes, he needs to restaple product tags and repack items, and then carefully place them in the right spots for display. "I love it," said Gelle. He hopes to one day work in the

See Wisconsin workers, page 2



River Falls Ace Hardware owner Dave Johnson, above left, has had great success with ProAct client Kevin Gelle, who has stocked shelves and performed other duties as part of a three-month work experience. Above right, Gelle works with vocational specialist Jennifer Malm, who provides regular job coaching and other vocational services for people with disabilities through ProAct.



CONSISTENT HELP LEADS TO EMPLOYMENT POSITION



Chris Blanchard, right, meets with ProAct Case Manager Brandon Mellett, who said Blanchard does a great job bringing in job leads. After interviewing for different positions, Blanchard secured a job at Little Ceasars in Lakeville. Mellett helps with interviewing skills and online applications.

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From the President...

As ProAct nears the summer months, and visions of vacations and warm weather activities, we must recognize that we have much to do to keep the organization on track and prepared for the future.

Our Minnesota Legislature is heading toward adjournment and our associations are tracking bills and providing information to facilitate informed decisionmaking. Although we will not always agree with all of their actions, our elected officials tend to be good, hard working people with a very difficult job to perform. No matter what decisions they make, a percentage of people will disagree with their choices. We will adjust our services as necessary in response to any new legislation.

Even though we continue to receive strong consumer satisfaction ratings from participants in our day training programs, finding the right volume and variety of work to fully meet everyone's needs is an ongoing challenge. We added resources to develop more community based work opportunities for our participants and will monitor our results and modify our approach as appropriate.

Much of our success in this area will come from the positive foundation we have built with businesses and our strong civic links, but we will add collaborators and partners as we move ahead in coming months.

ProAct completed a three-day survey process by three surveyors at the end of March as part of its accreditation by CARF, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. The survey team was very thorough and the process was rewarding



for staff. We will receive a formal report within eight weeks. A special thank you to those who participated in the survey process, and those who worked diligently with preparation.

While we can appreciate our past success serving our mission, we also know we have to continuously improve our services, change what we do in response to our stakeholders, and align our resources to achieve the outcomes desired by the individuals we serve. To that end, our strategic planning work will continue.

My thanks to all who are supportive of ProAct and care about providing high quality services that people with disabilities and all of our stakeholders expect and deserve. We appreciate your continued support.

Steve Ditschler

Wisconsin workers, from page 1
auto body industry.

"Every single staff member here has been amazing with him," said Jennifer Malm, a ProAct vocational specialist and job coach. Working alongside, she monitors and advises Gelle, who lives in Somerset, for his productivity, customer service and other on-the-job skills.

Malm also plans to bring others with disabilities to the store for work experience and skill assessments.

To the north, in Somerset, a second ProAct individual, Charlie Casarez, stocks food and household products at Econofoods.



Charlie Casarez, far left, stays on task and keeps the shelves stocked and presentable at Econofoods in Somerset. Assistant Store Manager Jake Davis said Casarez has caught on and fits in well with other employees.

Since his three-month work experience began, he's caught on well, and is good about asking questions when he's unsure about a task, explains Assistant Store Manager Jake Davis.

Casarez, who lives nearby, first took

LONGTIME PARTNER SHARES EXPERIENCE



What a relationship we have. Capital Safety has been working with ProAct for over 15 plus years now and we keep finding more things for ProAct to help us with.

It started out with ProAct putting the nuts and bolts on our brackets. Now they have expanded the brackets to doing subassemblies, finishing the brackets and packaging the brackets. They also tie string to hardware so we can send it out to be coated with PVC and put our RFID tags together.

Another big job is "Compliance in a Can," where they put a harness, roof anchor, shock and instructions in a pail and seal it.

A job that gets done at ProAct, and at Capital Safety, where ProAct has a group of about 15 clients come over, is the D-ring. This is a very big job to keep up with Capital Safety's demand. They have been very good at producing what is needed and when we need more, they come through for us.

We have had special projects for ProAct to do and they always find the coaches and clients to do this for us. Right now, we have them putting kits together for a big order ... this is very critical work that needs to be done so every kit gets the right product put in a bag. We are about one third of the way done; it is going good.

The clients are always happy to be here and very friendly. You can tell they enjoy their work here. When asked to do something, they are willing to help. I hope that our two teams will be working together for many years to come. There are always new requests that come along and it is so convenient ...

Thanks for all the hard work that is done at ProAct to make our business run smoothly.

[Capital Safety is a leading manufacturer of fall protection, confined space and rescue equipment. With facilities worldwide, the company is headquartered in Red Wing, Minn.]

Cindy Cordes
Soft Goods Master Scheduler
Capital Safety-DBI/Sala



an interest in the store as a customer.

"He knows absolutely everybody in that whole town," said Malm. With a friendly and outgoing personality, he's skilled in customer service, stays on task and is reliable. ProAct is training him to get a better grasp of the entire store.



He enjoys the independence the job offers, and is fast at his work, said vocational specialist Kailey Singleton. "A perfect fit, that's for sure."

Get to know us

Admission Information

Eagan, Hudson-
Sue Lowe 651-289-3151
Red Wing, Zumbrota-
Pamela Veith 651-388-7108

Need Employees?

Eagan- Catherine McCoy
651-289-3170 (groups)
Eagan- Heather Deutschlaender
651-289-3163 (individuals)
Hudson- Teresa Ducheneaux
715-410-4216
Red Wing- Kyle Adams
651-388-7108

Production Services

Eagan- Dave Cavalier 651-289-3158
Greg Pechman 651-289-3157
Red Wing- Jim Bohmbach or
Paul Mummert 651-388-7108

Donation Opportunities

Heidi Hanson 651-289-3149

ProAct's Four Locations

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204 Mississippi Ave., Red Wing, MN 55066
224 S. Main St., Zumbrota, MN 55992
1202 Beaudry Blvd., Hudson, WI 54016



ProAct is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for employment planning, employee development, and organizational and community employment.



Programs funded in part by The Greater Twin Cities United Way, United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha & Pierce Counties and United Way of Hastings.



ProAct, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with 40 years of experience.

Business expertise on board, from page 4

conducive to growth. And, he's assisted smaller companies in finding and developing strategic partners in Europe and Japan. Many don't realize this as an option, and Wilbrecht enjoys working across cultures.

It's important for organization leaders not to get caught in a rut where they define what they do and it's all they've considered doing for decades, the consultant explained. Even

when the subject is employment opportunities, market research can be helpful.

"With the economic activity still at a fairly low level people aren't looking for extra help, they're looking for ways of solving problems," he said. And, since smaller companies often can't afford automation, they can be great prospects for ProAct workers.

Wilbrecht is a member of the Metropolitan Economic Development

Association, which supports the creation and development of minority owned businesses. He's also active in SCORE, the Service Corps of Retired Executives, which helps small businesses through education and mentorship.

As a side interest, he is an avid photographer whose work has been published and exhibits at photography shows. A Minneapolis resident, he's married and the father of three children and six grandchildren.

Long term, from page 1

Ulrich helped Morgan find and keep a cart attendant job here in 2010. What's important is employer interaction, she said. ProAct talks to new employees, and provides follow up, but, before being hired, they're made "placement ready," through work assessment training. ProAct serves as a kind of advisor, she explains. In some ways, it's like a screening service for employers that qualifies job candidates.

Morgan said Ulrich helped him out a



bunch of times. "She's really good. I would say she's one of the best job coaches at ProAct."

Managers have found that Morgan can fill other roles as needed. He can restock shelves with returned items, and separate out damaged goods, sign people up for credit cards and run cleaning equipment.

"The corporate people love him. He's energetic, open minded, always friendly.

He's doing great," said Supervisor Becky Stuart. When Sam's Club corporate leaders make a visit, they want Morgan to be there.

When lines at the exit door get long, he works to move people through quickly. "It doesn't get any better than this. I love my job," he said. He plans to stay on as long as he can.



Red Wing impact, from page 1

them, as far as the secretaries and others upstairs at city hall," said Dan Anderson, building and grounds maintenance supervisor for the city of Red Wing. ProAct cleans seven different buildings.

Down the street at a city maintenance facility, ProAct workers scrubbed a cement floor clean, and covered many details. Dankers said city workers have been surprised by improvements,



ProAct's Rebecca Holden cleans framed photographs of the mayor and councilmembers inside the main entry to Red Wing City Hall.

and suggested a twice weekly cleaning schedule due to heavy traffic.

Flexibility was there from the start, as Dankers and his crew first asked for best cleaning

days and times. The schedule is important, because ProAct also covers two sewage treatment buildings, a water treatment structure and another building at a cemetery. Anderson said the group has no trouble taking care of extra things that are out of the ordinary.

Little city

oversight is needed, so the city supervisor checks in daily to find out if there were difficulties, and provide needed supplies.

Initially, Dankers questioned if the group could cover cleaning, garbage and recycling for the second floor offices, meeting rooms and rest rooms at city hall in an hour. That job can now be done in half the time. "That was a big concern of ours. Could we get it done?" he asked. "They stepped up to the plate."

By cleaning city hall in the morning, employees are more readily noticing what's been done. "They like walking into the building in the morning and smelling the nice clean building," said Anderson. The freshly cleaned aroma was something new, because previously, the facility was cleaned in the evening, he explained.



ProAct Board of Directors:

Chuck DeNet, Paul Kramp, Mary Ellen Leary, Larry Lehman, Jim Louwagie, Teri McCloughan, Dr. Barbara Rebhuhn, Marty Stapleton, DeDe Wanzek and Jon Wilbrecht.

COLLEGE STUDENTS ASSIST WITH JOB PLANNING

Motivation can be contagious, and who is better motivated than a group of college students getting ready for a super competitive job market? ProAct participants in an employment training class found out in one-on-one sessions with students from Brown College.

Participants in Eagan heard from students studying video game design, criminal justice, multimedia and other fields. The exercise was part of a career development class involving Lisa Thomas, the dean of education at Brown. After her presentation, students paired up with ProAct consumers to discuss each individual's interests and how these could be connected to job possibilities, explains ProAct Coordinator



Eagan participants meet one-on-one with students from Brown College who are studying a variety of disciplines. The students helped generate job ideas and discussed possibilities with a willing group.

Charlotte Eastin.

"The room was just thick with conversation," she said. "It was so good to see everyone so deeply engaged." ProAct clients walked away with worksheets identifying possible career interests and the students gained leadership experience. Some may become managers one day, and be responsible for sitting down with employees to talk about career paths, said Eastin. It was the second of what's hoped to be multiple meetings.

Conversations deepened, work sheets were created for consumers and case managers are following up for next steps. When someone from outside comes in to give advice, Eastin explained, it's new, fresh and interesting. The ideas start flowing and people come up with new possibilities.

PROACT BRIEFS:

Job skills class in Adult Day Services focuses on goals



Eagan's Julie Coon teaches a job skills class to people with brain injuries and other conditions that emphasizes attributes important to employers.

If all is truly about attitude, then work cannot be successful without having the correct mindset and approach.

That's what ProAct clients with brain injuries and other conditions are learning in an interactive job skills class taught by Julie Coon. Conflict resolution, communication skills and overall professionalism are covered, and students also analyze their own skills and interests, she explained.

"We go over interviewing techniques, interview questions and how to present yourself," she said. Some will be ready soon to seek out independent jobs. Experience on ProAct's workforce and in the community allows opportunities to demonstrate good employee attributes, as well.

Accreditation affirms mission



CEO Steve Ditschler with CARF surveyors, who shared their findings.

ProAct received a rigorous, three-day, multi-site peer review from its primary rating organization, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, or CARF.

"This was certainly the most thorough survey I have ever experienced," said Sally Ogren, director of programs at ProAct in Red Wing and a CARF surveyor herself for about 15 years. She said the surveyors had many good things to say about the organization. In addition to the prestige that comes with accreditation, there's another valuable aspect that results, continuous improvement, Ogren said. She credited staff members who worked very hard to do the best job possible.

U.S. Dept. of Ag certified for prepackaged food

ProAct has been certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for many years to process prepackaged food.

The license confirms that ProAct has met standards of operation for cleanliness, data maintenance, traceability, health and safety.



New MnDOT sponsored buses assist fleet operations



This is the second of three new buses paid for using 80 percent matching funds from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. A third has also arrived.

June Tapemark golf Pro-Am to support ProAct

The Tapemark Annual Charity Pro-Am golf events run from June 5 to 10 and continue to support ProAct and other nonprofits serving people with developmental disabilities with the proceeds.

Billing itself as the longest-running charity golf event in Minnesota



and the Upper Midwest, Tapemark is adding a Women's Pro-Am and Women's Professional Championship. It's the only women's pro-am in Minnesota, and the Women's Professional Championship is the first of its kind in the state. Learn more at tapemarkgolf.org.

Mark calendars for banquets

ProAct's annual recognition banquets are set for September 28 and October 5 for the Red Wing/Zumbrota and Eagan/Hudson facilities, respectively. Save the dates.

FACES OF PROACT: READY TO HELP YOU

Businesses, governmental agencies and other organizations have a variety of needs when it comes to the tasks to be accomplished, and ProAct has multiple staff members dedicated to solving problems.

"Our customers rely on us for so much more than what appears on their purchase order," said Eagan Sales Manager Greg Pechman. They rely on ProAct to make corrections, report on quality and let them know about volume discrepancies, he said.

The quality checks are constant, which is part of the reason that companies often consider ProAct as an integral part of their operations, Pechman explained. The idea is to do more than what's expected.

The organization's customers are surveyed annually and their primary reasons for choosing ProAct include:

- » Quality
- » On time delivery
- » Capabilities
- » Customer service
- » Low price

In-house operations are complemented by a well-organized external workforce that includes teams and individuals who fill many job duties in the Twin Cities, southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin communities.

Employment candidates are trained and pre-qualified for many positions. Additionally, work assessments or job tryouts have proven ideal for many employers, who often decide to hire ProAct workers on for permanent positions.

Work crews are managed by well-trained supervisors and individual workers are supported at a level with which the employer is comfortable, through job coaching, help with orientation and other assistance.



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Comments welcome, alternative formats available— Upon request, this publication is available in alternate languages and formats. Comments are welcome. Contact Heidi at 651-289-3149, hhanson@proactinc.org.

JOB INTENSITY MEETS BUSY RENTAL BUSINESS

U-Haul Lot Manager Paul Jirovec isn't shy about his work. That's important, because his boss wants him to approach customers immediately.

"They can't even take a breath without us waiting on them, serving them," said Jirovec, who works side by side with his manager at the Bloomington store.

The lot manager, who had worked at a ProAct facility in Eagan and crews in the community, was determined to get his own position. As he courted U-Haul, Jirovec figured out his own bus transportation from Burnsville, explains Case Manager Brandon Mellett in ProAct's Rehabilitation department.

On the lot and at the customer counter Jirovec moves briskly, inspecting and cleaning the rental equipment, parking trucks and helping customers. They roll in and out all day long. "I know this lot was a lot emptier than when I came here today," he said. Business levels were expected to peak the next day, the last day of the month.

The job is physically challenging, and there was much to learn. Jirovec dispenses propane, and does minor equipment repairs and maintenance. He slips a new chain grommet on and replaces the coupler assembly on an auto transport. It should have been done two



Lot Manager Paul Jirovec, right, marks a checklist as he inspects a van returned by U-Haul customer. As renters pull in, the lot manager tries to get to them immediately, creating an atmosphere of grateful service. He received placement assistance and job coaching from ProAct case managers.

hours earlier, but customers needed help, so the lot manager attended to the urgent.

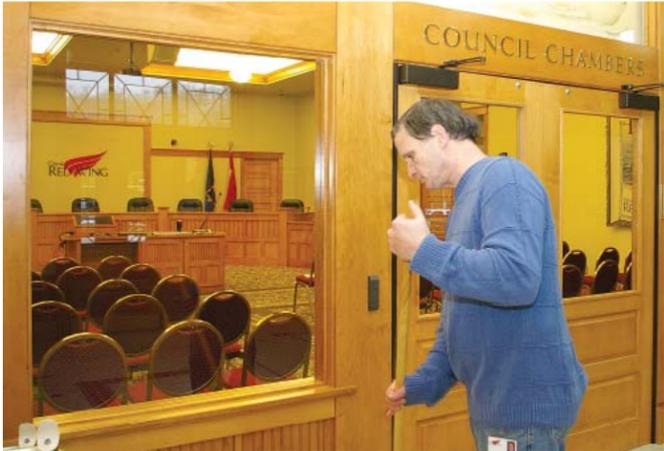
Jirovec said he always has to speak up and speak clearly, sometimes even telling a customer that he's not sure about a question. Instead, he offers to go and figure it out. It's important to be able to relate to people on a personal level, he said.

There are weeks when he works overtime, but this position is a steady, part-time post. "You've got to make yourself indispensable, prove that they can't exist without you," he said.

Happy and eager to work, the case manager said customer service is definitely a strength.

Whether it's here or in a retail setting, this young man maintains an enthusiasm and a drive. "I'm kind of pumped, yeah."





Welcome to People Achieving,

an inside look at the activities and programs of ProAct, Inc., serving people with disabilities in and around the Twin Cities, in communities along the Mississippi and in southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin.



ProAct's hand made necklace slides are also available at: Loons & Ladyslippers and Redmen Club in Red Wing; 2nd Street Market in Hastings; Scofield Drug and The Picket Fence in Cannon Falls and Coffee by the Bay, Bay City, Wis.

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HIGH VOLUME, DETAILED PROJECTS PROVE IDEAL

The range of work capabilities and volumes at ProAct keep expanding, with new projects coming in. Each job brings unique demands, and builds on the one before it. Here are a couple of examples:

'Beefing up' operations



Utilizing a crew that was often 50 to 60 strong, ProAct's Eagan operation has handled more than five million sheaths for cattle insemination straws. Cleanliness is a high priority, so individuals are outfitted accordingly.

Customer can focus with felt filter orders filled



Custom sized filters, left and right, are carefully assembled and glued. The felt pads are cut into large buckle like shapes. The customer found the tasks were ideal for a vendor like ProAct. The arrangement allows the manufacturer to focus on its core competencies.



WILBRECHT BRINGS BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

New ProAct board member Jon Wilbrecht comes from a different corporate world than the nonprofit, one where business survival relies on company "reinvention" every four to five years. The manufacturing consultant and high tech industry veteran joined the board in 2011.

"A lot of organizations get buried in the day to day stuff, and the future catches up to them before they're ready for it," said Wilbrecht, who often assists firms with strategic planning.

He said ProAct is at the top of Minnesota nonprofits in terms of its financial strength and accreditations. "There's not enough good things to say about them compared to your average nonprofit in Minnesota," he said. One of the ongoing challenges is how to find enough of the right employment and training opportunities for a prospective client base that is large and has diverse needs.

Wilbrecht was recommended by ProAct Board Chair Mary Ellen Leary.

While the board had experts in the legal, accounting, banking, education and human resources professions, it was in need of someone from the manufacturing world with a strong strategic planning background, Wilbrecht explained.

In his first nine months with the group, he learned much about the myriad of federal and state regulations that define what can and can't be done. Funding challenges in the nonprofit world can be compared to fluctuations in the manufacturing marketplace. "What we see typically is when a product becomes obsolete, or there is competition from overseas, you are faced with a whole new situation," he said.

His perspective stems from 25 years leading Wilbrecht Electronics, Inc., a St. Paul company he recently sold to two European firms.

As a consultant, Wilbrecht often comes into business situations that are somewhat unstructured. He finds common themes or focuses and develops a framework that's Business expertise on board, see page 2



Board member Jon Wilbrecht owned a manufacturing businesses for 25 years.