



PROACT'S CONNECTIONS MAKE SOLID JOB MATCH IN HARDWARE

It was a match made in heaven— or, at least in hardware. That impression is obvious at Eagan Hardware Hank, where a recent staff addition, Dean Steffenhagen, has not only improved service, but the teamwork and camaraderie that promote it.

The wait in line was a brief one for this ticket to work. It took Steffenhagen just one meeting with seasoned ProAct Vocational Specialist Leann Crosby, who quickly saw in him the traits and skills needed by the bustling store. Crosby has maintained a connection with its owner and his staff for nearly a decade.

“The ProAct people like Leann are very good at understanding their people that they have to work with and what they would be best suited for,” said Hardware Hank Owner Allan Funk. “When she recommended it I trusted her judgment.”

Crosby went to Shop Manager Dave Finch as well, insisting that he meet Steffenhagen. Finch often manages the whole store, as well.

Steffenhagen’s customer service experience stems from 10 years working at an automotive service and rental facility in Rosemount. He worked on ProAct enclaves earlier this year, and on the work floor. At ProAct, he was always interested in the new jobs coming in, said human service technician Rachel Serres. He’s also very self motivated, seeing things that need to be done and doing



Shop Manager Dave Finch, right, jests with Dean Steffenhagen, left, calling him an assistant manager in training. Steffenhagen was asked to review procedures with another employee and provide guidance.



them, she explained.

His hardware boss, Dave Finch, helps him to understand proper procedures and communicate that information to other

employees. Chief among these items are snowblower repair orders and other power tools. He also repairs screens.

“My job is to make sure everything goes right,” Steffenhagen said.

He even sees many of his previous customers from the gas station come in. “They come all the way up here because this place has a lot better reputation,” said Steffenhagen. The staff has found him to be likeable.

“He’s a lot of fun, and has a good attitude.”

ProAct and Vocational services go full steam ahead in Hudson

ProAct and its job placement effort are forging ahead at the Life Opportunities program in Hudson, where the organization has just purchased its building.

The building on Beaudry Boulevard had been leased but with its purchase, ProAct gains added stability and supports growth.

The pace of job placement activity is increasing in Hudson, where the full



complement of vocational services now come into play.

Led by Vocational Specialist Jennifer Malm, participants have begun interviewing

for a number of open positions.

It is hoped that as many as 12 will eventually receive her aid in employment searches, including placement and assessment services, work adjustment training, job coaching and short and long term support.



Vocational Specialist Jennifer Malm

VOLUNTEERS JOIN IN UNITED WAY FOOD PACKING FOR KIDS

Their volunteer job is simple, pack three meals for people in need three times a month, but its impacts are widespread, reaching 139 Red Wing area children and their families.

Individuals with ProAct in Red Wing are leaving an impression on the “Packing for the Weekend” program put on by the United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha and Pierce Counties.

“They’re a joy to work with, they take it so seriously,” said Interim United Way Director Maureen Nelson. “And, a couple of them are pros, they’ve done it many times.” Groups of four or five volunteers have taken ownership in the program, she said.



Reliable and amiable, volunteers from ProAct in Red Wing, above, package food for the area United Way’s program. From left are participants David Bollenbeck, Brandon Marcks, Amy Garlitch and Seamis Kelly. At right, Case Manager Heidi Befort with ProAct’s United Way storefront display.

The backpack bags contain breakfast, lunch and dinner items, ranging from macaroni and cheese, peanut butter, tuna, spaghetti and pancakes, Nelson explained. Amounts for each package are specific, and one ProAct participant is known for being “overly generous.”



Client photos courtesy of Red Wing Republican Eagle.



After finishing up on one packing day, Nelson said the ProAct team put on their coats and talked about leaving when one enthusiastic young man held up his hand and loudly asked everyone to wait. Then, in unison, they all said “Thank You,” Nelson said. “It was charming

See United Way connection, page 2

REFLECTING ON WHAT MATTERS

With Thanksgiving just behind us and the end of the year holidays approaching, we get a chance to look back on the year and be grateful for what has transpired.

At ProAct, we realize that what we do has a multiplying effect, impacting many family members and friends, as well as the individuals with disabilities we serve. Care and concern for others are a primary daily driver for many in our line of work.

The holidays give us a chance to renew those ties in our families, and realize how much each person means to us.

I can speak for the entire ProAct organization when I say that we value the relationships that have been built. We provide important services, and are privileged to be entrusted with such great responsibility.

In any profession, skills and abilities and the work itself are things that many of us hold dear. As we help others in these areas, our actions can change lives. Thank you for partnering with us. We wish you all a joyous holiday season!

St. Steffenhagen



Deep roots: New RW production manager

Stretching back some 70 years, the Bohmbach name in Red Wing means baseball, but now new history is being made as Jim Bohmbach moves into a ProAct production manager position in his hometown.

A veteran human resource manager with more than a dozen years at Red Wing Shoe, he first came to ProAct as a job developer before assuming new job responsibilities late in 2011. Bohmbach helped individuals to find meaningful employment. His new position focuses on coordination



Except for a short stint in the Twin Cities, Jim Bohmbach has lived and breathed Red Wing.

See New production manager, page 2

From the President...

As we approach the end of the year, we are grateful for the opportunity to do the work we do for the people we serve. We are deeply appreciative of the many people and entities that support our work, including the businesses that provide employment and training opportunities which are so critical to our collective success.



Our positive relationships and goodwill developed over the decades will continue to be critically important going forward. We all know that we can build on, but not rest on, past accomplishments, and that change is inevitable. All indications are that the environment in which we pursue our mission is changing dramatically. In response, we are in the process of reviewing and updating our strategic plan to align our initiatives to help ensure that we can continue to deliver successful outcomes. The importance of partnerships, collaborations, and support of various forms will increase.

Our success in the future may also require a higher level of industriousness and creativity than it has in the past. Under any future scenario, we need the impact of all our relationships to help us achieve the outcomes all of our stakeholders expect and deserve. Thank you for your continued support. Working together, our future is bright. Happy New Year!

Steven Ditschler

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 White
651-289-3163 (individuals)
Hudson- Teresa Ducheneaux
715-410-4216
Red Wing- Malissa Stahnke
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

3195 Neil Armstrong Blvd., Eagan, MN 55121
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.

IN THE LONG TERM: FARM JOB TURNS TWO, GETS EVEN BETTER

There's much to do with a livestock operation, and ProAct client Nolan Miller, 24, isn't bashful when a task demands attention.

The farm worker's nearly three year relationship with Bluff Breeze Farm in Cannon Falls is one of great trust, as Miller has gained the full confidence of its owners.

"He has embraced all of it and is very proud, as he should be," said co-owner Connie Bodeker. Her quick list of Miller's tasks touches on no less than 18 items where Miller has proven to be far more than a human resource.

Chief among those talents is Miller's tender care for the alpacas raised here, which typically sell for thousands of dollars. The animals have to be held carefully for nail trimming and medications. And, the females have to be watched closely for baby births, a task that Miller could handle by himself, Bodeker explains.

When a baby alpaca comes out sideways, with just a front foot and back foot, the back foot has to be pushed back in so it can deliver, he explained. Last summer, 29 alpacas gave birth. Miller has found new babies on the ground in the morning when he arrives. All survived.

"Even when I was in school, always wanted to work with animals," he said, "to do something with my hands." He lives on his parents farm in Zumbrota, a 30 minute drive from work.

Some alpacas can be stubborn, said Miller, who helps halter train them. There's a lift and pull process when one of the llama like animals won't move. The 100 to 120 pound animals can pull strongly, too.

When the animals aren't cooperating, Miller said he takes some breaths to calm down and starts over. Sometimes, he calls his boss for help.



Dairy farmers Miller knows are shocked when they learn that alpacas can sell for thousands, even tens of thousands. The fleece is popular for clothing. "They say, 'Gosh, I'm in the wrong business.'"

The farm hand has progressed from a shy young man to a tour coordinator for different groups and larger events. People who board animals there have been impressed by his knowledge, Bodeker explained. "I was really shy when I started here," said Miller. "I didn't hardly want to talk to anybody. Now I guess I can't stop talking."

Bodeker said Miller never balks at work.

He mows, moves supplies, fixes the roadway and cleans the barns. He feeds more than 100 alpacas, and the farm dogs and cats, and never complains about the cold or heat.

"Everyone that meets him falls in love with him and his great attitude. He's kind, polite, gentle and considerate," she said.

And, his memory is quite strong when it



Bluff Breeze Farm's 60 acres in the Cannon River valley are where Nolan Miller, left, has gone to work since being placed by ProAct early in 2009. His responsibilities with the animals are extensive, and his people skills have grown, as well.

comes to shutting gates and the tasks that must be done.

Bodeker said it's hard to get him to go home because he looks at the farm as his home and treats it as such. She has full confidence in him with the animals and with their home, even when she and her husband are away.

"I love working here," he said.

PREP ACCELERATES FOR VALUED CARF SURVEY EARLY IN 2012

In 2009, ProAct achieved a place in the top 3 percent of disability organizations accredited by CARF, the international Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

The countdown has begun for a new CARF survey, most likely in March 2012. Over an all important three days, three different CARF surveyors will review ProAct's four facilities, talk to its people, customers and others.

ProAct's Sally Ogren, director of programs in Red Wing, has been on the other end of these evaluations surveying similar organizations, for 17 years. "The heart and soul of what we need to do in preparation is to review the 2011 CARF standards and make sure our staff understand them, and know which standards apply to them," she said. The



In 2009, experts from CARF reveal survey results with ProAct, placing the group in the top 3 percent of those surveyed.

standards are to be lived, not just "done," she explained. The peer-review process is one that continuously reviews quality, and staff members are integral to that effort. "The fact is, it's a good system," Ogren said.

Changes to CARF standards happen every year, and those are laid out in a manual for organizations to use. CARF tries to prepare surveyors to be as objective as possible, but

each surveyor has areas that may be open to interpretation.

Surveyors not only talk to staff members, but to many clients, parents, social workers and others to gather information for their report.

Elements include teaching staff to work to a certain set of standards, having a backup to ProAct Policies and procedures, stretching staff to do a better job, trying to incorporate "evidence based" practices, meaning tried and true methods that have proven most effective and following through on promises.

Ogren said CARF consistently goes to individuals with disabilities themselves to ask about their needs and wants. "CARF hasn't forgotten who it's working for," she said. Veterans at CARF will ask groups like ProAct, "What do your consumers need and want and how close are you coming to providing that?"

United Way connection, from page 1 and so kind, but the irony was— they were thanking us for allowing them to volunteer!" That unusual act prompted Nelson to stop and think of all that she's thankful for.

From articles in the Red Wing Republican Eagle to a high level of community involvement, the program now entering its

New production manager, from page 1

of production work for business customers. These jobs, performed by ProAct participants, are often a training ground for competitive employment.

The new manager said the production priority has to be client work that meets quality standards and timely delivery. At "the Shoe," he worked with plant managers to improve work flows and employee teamwork to help foster a positive work environment. ProAct has many more products to cover and smaller jobs, he explained. That said, his background on the rehabilitation side provides a solid basis for his overall charge to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

"Jim exhibits the people skills and knowledge needed to keep our Red Wing production area running smoothly, while also working to make it more responsive and competitive," said ProAct President and CEO Steven Ditschler. "His competitive nature and ability to bring people together are crucial to the operation."

A longtime sports coach, Bohmbach often says its not necessarily the most skilled players who win games, but those who work most effectively together. "Part of my job

second winter has been a hit. "Every person that I've talked to about this program ... to ask for help and money and support— every single person has said 'absolutely yes.'" Nelson said. "No one wants to think of hungry children."

Associated Bank hosts the packing events, where employees are joined by additional volunteers from Red Wing Shoe.

is developing a team atmosphere." ProAct workers can use their strengths and build on their areas that need improvement, he explained. Displaying an "attitude of gratitude," the new production manager said he loves getting up to go to work, goes home with a smile and appreciates the opportunity to influence people.

In addition to human resource management, Bohmbach worked as a teacher's assistant at Red Wing High School and was head coach of the school's varsity baseball team. He served in human resources at group homes for people with developmental disabilities and in youth programming at the Eagan YMCA, and was an assistant baseball coach at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

"Jim has demonstrated that he has an excellent understanding of

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.

ProAct's needs and takes a 'proactive' approach to problem-solving and developing effective responses to issues that need action," said Sally Ogren, director of programs at ProAct in Red Wing. Working with Bohmbach and other leaders, ProAct is exploring creative ideas for the production area and improvements in efficiency, she explained.

After graduating from Red Wing High School in the late 1970s, he left the city to

pursue a degree in business administration from Minnesota State University, Mankato, and later earned a Bachelor's degree in business management from Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee.

Married and the father of three children and three stepchildren, all of them grown, Bohmbach and his wife make their home in Red Wing.



Bohmbach visits with Laurie Nasser on the production floor in Red Wing. His new role in production will bring him into contact with many customers as well.

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.

SPECIAL HONORS: LONG TERM RW EMPLOYERS

Several Long Term Employer Partners were noted for special honors at ProAct's Recognition Banquet in Red Wing— Capital Safety, Goodhue County Social Services and BIC APP (Norwood Promotional Products).

"It's about their commitment and partnership with us," said Jim Bohmbach, production manager in Red Wing. He said ProAct participants gain confidence, like talking about their work and look forward to their jobs every day. "They don't want to do anything else ... that's their job ... they feel responsible," he said. ProAct leaders also stressed that the employers aren't involved to be charitable, but they rely on people with disabilities to provide quality work.

The honorees each have employed people from ProAct for many years. Combined, these employers represent dozens of jobs that have an impact on the local



Long Term Employer Partners honored, from left: Nina Arneson, director of Goodhue County Health and Human Services; Director Greg Schoener (retired); Jay VanLoon, BIC APP and Brian Knapp, Capital Safety.

community.

The businesses each started their relationship with ProAct by sending production work to the nonprofit to be done in-house. That soon developed into work crew arrangements where people with disabilities came to work at employer sites.

The relationship has spanned some 15 years with Capital Safety, which assembles and packages fall protection equipment.

BIC APP produces numerous custom imprinted items used for giveaways and other promotions, and has employed people from

ProAct for about five years.

The nonprofit's relationship with Goodhue County goes back much further, to the mid-1980s, when Social Service Director Greg Schoener brought in people with disabilities to cover janitorial duties. That was later expanded to include clerical tasks and other projects, including document imaging.



PROACT BRIEFS:

Meet, greet at the 'Y' during Give to the Max Day



Case Manager Sarah Kopp, right, and client Dalyn Bruemmer demonstrate jewelry making techniques at the "RedWingives" event to promote "Give to the Max Day" at the Red Wing YMCA.

It was a \$13.5 million day for Minnesota charities, and ProAct stepped up its involvement in "Give to the Max Day" at a special event at Red Wing Family YMCA.

Using a word combination to stress community support, "RedWingives" brought special attention to the nonprofit when the program captured video footage and

interviews used in the statewide promotion centered at the Mall of America.

ProAct also announced its participation via email, and matching dollars were offered by the Jones Family Foundation and Red Wing Area Fund.



Support vehicle via Tapemark Charity Golf



Anderson Agency President Shaun Irwin, left, and Bob Klaus, Jr., right, present the large check to ProAct CEO Steven Ditschler and Employment Manager Catherine McCoy from the Tapemark Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament.

A large golf tournament that attracts area pros generated a \$10,460 donation to ProAct, funds destined to help match a

new bus grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

"It's always gratifying to help our community nonprofit groups like ProAct that are doing the real heavy lifting for people in need," said Anderson Agency President Shaun Irwin. "The economic situation has only made it more important than ever to be steadfast in our support for the wonderful work. We'd like to do even more and try harder than ever to do just that in the years to come." Anderson Agency was the key sponsor for the event.

Boot and Shoe union give toward sustainable work



Red Wing Boot and Shoe Union Steward Roger Spindler presents a check for \$1,375 to ProAct's Red Wing Director of Services, Sally Ogren. The donation will be used to assist participants in finding sustainable employment. Local 527 represents workers at Red Wing Shoe Co.

BIC APP employees, Rotary clubs contribute funds

A diversity day event at BIC APP (Norwood) in Red Wing netted an employee contribution of \$1,611 for ProAct.

The nonprofit has a crew working regularly at BIC. "So, it's not some 'pie in the sky' thing, but the people they work next to each day," said Red Wing Director of Programs Sally Ogren.

Additional contributions included \$3,000 received from the Eagan Rotary Club and \$2,500 from the Hudson Daybreak Rotary Club as startup funds for ProAct's bird feeder projects in that community.



PROACT ACTORS GO BIG, RW GETS STARTED

Break out the props and the script, it's time to practice for the big show, a play created for the Special Olympics designed to spread a new message about people with disabilities.



A group of Eagan ProAct participants and staff meet up on Saturdays at the nonprofit to run through multiple scenes of "It's Our School," a portrayal of modern high school students in realistic settings. The production focuses on disability issues and is based on interviews with Twin Cities youth. It debuted during the 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games at the University of Nebraska.

ProAct's presentation is destined for as many as 10 different high schools in Minnesota, and opens at the Lakeville Area Arts Center on March 11 at 7 p.m. Tickets are free.

At ProAct's Red Wing location, a first ever play came together, "Exciting Times in Time." Produced by two students from Red



Eagan's select group of actors and leaders for "It's Our School" include, from left to right, Chelsea Greene, Stephanie Osman (staff), Kelly Garrison, Brandon Ziemke, Perry Thrun (staff), Heather Hamilton, Heidi Magnusson, Samantha Blegseth (staff) and Justin Beebe. Not pictured: Dan Abramowicz (staff), Paul Daily, Barb Edd (staff), Rachele McKinley and Rachel Serres (staff).



Red Wing High School Senior Mikayla Cota, right, directs ProAct Red Wing participants, from left, Donald Jones, Seamis Kelly, Dean Reis, Heather Baune, Kurt VanDeWalker and – in the location's play production debut, "Exciting Times in Time."

DON'T MISS "IT'S OUR SCHOOL"

Sunday, March 11 – 7 p.m.
Lakeville Area Arts Center
20965 Holyoke Avenue, Lakeville



Red Wing High School teacher Jillynne Raymond helped coordinate the effort with the students and

ProAct. She had taught many of the young adults when they were in school. "I am so proud of them," said Raymond.

Case Manager Heidi Befort encouraged the effort, which involved classes and much preparation. She said the process helps some participants to focus more.

The Red Wing players gained experience, and particularly enjoyed improvisation exercises.

FOR THE BIRDS, THE FIRE AND ELEGANT EVENTS

Necessity really is the "mother of invention," and new creations from ProAct are filling an employment need by making simple treasures for the outdoors, namely, decorative bird feeders.

"They're beautiful," said Life Opportunities Program Coordinator Teresa Ducheneaux. The hand made feeders are crafted by ProAct clients in Hudson using different mold designs, gelatin and seeds. They're packaged with attractive nest material and ribbons. Prices are \$12 for a large feeder and \$8 for smaller versions.

As ProAct supporters enjoy some fowl play outside their windows, they'll also have help getting some winter warmth underway using the nonprofit's fire starters. Now available at ProAct in Eagan and Red Wing, and at some retailers, they sell for \$4 for a package of eight.



Lauren Hallbeck and one of ProAct's newest products, a decorative bird feeder made by Hudson participants.

And, the most popular, and widely available ProAct product, polished slide jewelry, is now in greater supply thanks to increased production. Pieces of bowling balls are transformed into slide pendants that shimmer. These retail for \$10, with necklaces available for \$2 and \$5. For a list of retailers, see proactinc.org or call 651-388-7108.

Recognition relived at year's largest events



Recognition banquets for 2011 again reminded participants, families and staff of the special relationship they have with the ProAct organization. Attendance was well over 500 at the Red Wing/Zumbrota and Eagan/Hudson events, and the latter featured KSTP weatherman Jonathan Yuhas, right, at middle.



877-245-0405 toll free

Maximizing Individual Potential for Greater Self-Sufficiency



Welcome to People Achieving,

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

Mark your calendars for the **ProAct Golf Classic** August 13 ...
And, check out ProAct's new **Golf Tees**, available in bulk, in 10, 12 and 15 count packages. See proactinc.org



NEW TO BOARD: HUDSON HEALTH BIZ PRO

Physical therapist Deanna (DeDe) Wanzek employs a wide range of therapy techniques and now brings her expertise to ProAct's board of directors.

"Many of the Hudson participants are people that I saw as children," she said. "It is very interesting to me to see the lifecycle— how things were for them when they were children and now how life is for them as adults." Wanzek joined the board after learning about ProAct from established board member Dr. Barb Rebhuhn, someone she's known for 30 years.

Much of Wanzek's work involves helping children to gain needed motor skills and adults to regain skills lost through an accident or injury.

The physical therapist is a successful closed head injury survivor, having suffered from a broadside car accident 22 years ago. "I was extremely fortunate. Had he hit the car about three feet more toward the front I probably would not be here," she said.

Her employer, Avanti, is a nonprofit that provides physical, occupational and speech therapy to children and adults with disabilities. She started the organization as a for-profit and sold it a few years ago, when adults were added to its client list.

As an owner, she handled the business side, but



New board member DeDe Wanzek has enjoyed a long career in physical therapy just over the border in Wisconsin.

also learned every job at the operation.

"When we first started, my husband and I would put the kids to bed early on Friday nights and do the billing at the kitchen table," she said. He would run to the local all night grocery store to make copies.

The early grassroots organization has grown to 35 employees, many of them part time.

Among Wanzek's qualifications, she is a pediatric clinical specialist, a certified lymphedema therapist and a certified kinesiotope instructor. For the latter, she travels internationally as an instructor. Kinesiotaping is used across the lifespan. It is perhaps best known through professional athletes, but can be used for pain management in other adults and to help facilitate or relax muscles in children. The elastic tape treats chronic pain to facilitate or inhibit pulling muscles, providing stability.

The newest board member is also a pediatric instructor at St. Catherine University in St. Paul. As part of the school's doctorate of physical therapy program, she covers typical and atypical development, as well as treatment techniques.

She has specialized in pediatrics for 30 years, and uses a holistic approach to evaluation and treatment.



Janitorial Experts and so much more ...

Contact:
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Malissa Stahnke
651-388-7108
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Hudson,
Teresa Ducheneaux
715-410-4216
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Eagan, Cathy McCoy
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cmccoy@proactinc.org



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PROACT'S LONGEST TERM EMPLOYEE SAW MANY CHANGES OVER 40 YEARS

When Paul Rodewald came to ProAct as a bookkeeper at the end of 1971, the nonprofit had reached the ripe young age of two, with 14 clients and seven staff members served from a laundry room at Red Wing's old city hospital building.

Nearly 40 years later, the production director in Red Wing retired, but held onto the esteemed title of longest term ProAct employee— ever. One might argue that during his tenure that began with a ProAct predecessor, Interstate Rehabilitation Center (IRC), the lives of people with disabilities saw more change than the 150 years that preceded him.

Starting in the 70s, Minnesotans with developmental disabilities were being transferred out of state institutions and IRC was there to help. To deliver services to people with disabilities in a community setting, rather than through state institutions, IRC's system of boarding homes was developed. These were followed by licensed foster homes and group homes which opened up additional community living choices for people with disabilities, explains Sally Ogren, director of programs at ProAct in Red Wing.

IRC grew, and moved to the Towerview Campus on U.S. Highway 61. Soon after,

the young nonprofit opened a retail store downtown.

Rodewald kept the books and managed the operation, which sold leather accessories, wine and beer making supplies, boat model kits and other items. He put his two-year accounting degree to work, and said that IRC was teaching him much more about the nonprofit financial world than he ever learned in school.

Helping the business community to see ProAct as having value, versus being a charity, has been an emphasis from day one, Rodewald said. The group has been a labor source for many years, but wanted to stress the quality of its work and business-like practices. That's part of why the original Interstate Rehabilitation Center came to call itself IRC Industries in the early 1970s. The strategy worked.

After its growing operation moved to the Towerview Campus on the city's northwest side, its space needs grew from one floor to three, according to Rodewald. Planning for a new building began, and the current structure in Red Wing's industrial park went up for sale. It was about twice the size that was needed, said Rodewald, but just two years later, visionary planners were vindicated as the organization not only needed the space, but remodeled it to better accommodate its programs. A

loading dock was added, front office space was expanded and, eventually, an addition that had seen several uses was converted to house IRC's Day Training and Habilitation Program.

Rodewald wore many hats at the expanding nonprofit, including accounting

supervisor, sales and marketing representative and, by the 1980s, production management. Production revenues increased significantly every year through 2000. IRC became ProAct after joining with a similar Eagan-based program, Owobopte, in 2002.



Paul Rodewald, right, gets excited as he unwraps a parting gift with his wife, Sue, a lighted piece of yard art, during his going away party at ProAct in Red Wing.