



RECYCLING EFFORT BEGINS FOR STORES

The bottle stuffed note from a deserted island floated to civilization's shore with important news. Today, the modern "Message in a Bottle" program dispatches much larger bottles to collect recyclables at south metro gas stations with ProAct's help.



Tim Zentner stands ready to empty the "Message in a Bottle" collection containers in the south metro.

Using receptacles adorned with attractive decals located at south metro convenience stores, ProAct is partnering with the Recycling Association of Minnesota and Minnesota Beverage Association to recover nearly a quarter-million beverage containers per year.

"The new venture will provide some added jobs for ProAct clients, while serving a community need," said ProAct President and CEO Steven Ditschler. A kickoff event to announce the effort was held July 26 at a Holiday station in Burnsville.

The program is working toward a major expansion from 16 convenience stores to some 150. Most of the bottle and can collection bins will be positioned by the gas pumps at popular stations, making them highly accessible to people on the go.

"This program is a win-win-win for businesses, their customers and the community," said Tim Wilkin, president of the Minnesota Beverage Association.



Kick off event with, from right, Steve Ditschler, Senator Ted Daley, Ellen Telander, Minn. Recycling Assoc. and Tim Wilkin, Minn. Beverage Association.

ProAct Golf Classic

August 13, Hastings Country Club
proactinc.org
651-289-3170



ONCE HELPED BY PROACT, NOW GROOMED FOR MANAGEMENT

People looking for electronics in Red Wing have only a few places to go, and associate Travis Simpson at Walmart is the resident expert who can answer their questions better than anyone else.

Walmart Zone Merchandise Supervisor Paul Barkla has followed Simpson's progress. "Travis can answer any questions back in electronics for any customer, at any time," said Barkla, about the man placed by ProAct. "The other associates look up to him for his knowledge."

The 30-year-old said he worked at Walmart for the first four years after the store opened, but a heart attack he had when he was 22 set him back. Then ProAct entered the picture, providing job search assistance. He



went completely on his own in May 2011.

Production Manager Jim Bohmbach, when he was a job developer, went to work, and Simpson felt the effects. "He was a heck of a fighter for me" said Simpson. Bohmbach would make calls, and do whatever Simpson needed, including extra helpful tasks. Simpson tries to do the same for his employer, taking time in the evenings to research the best electronics, and then advising his manager on what to order.

A job in retail was the young man's goal. "This is exactly where I wanted to be. If I didn't love this job, I wouldn't be here," he said. The feelings are mutual, as his manager said the store is "tickled to death" to have him on staff.

Simpson said the store has him on track for a promotion in the fall. He's training others



Walmart associate Travis Simpson answers questions from Red Wing customers. The electronics maestro has made himself indispensable to the store, where he trains others and is preparing for a promotion to manager in the fall.

on the cell phone center, and leaders are testing his skills in other areas. The associate's main responsibility is in electronics and stationery, which has 15 to 20 rows of product.

He's also adept at selling product service plans, Barkla said. Simpson was featured in a Walmart video about team work, and even helps team-lift 45-pound televisions for customers, his boss explained.

See Groomed to lead, page 2

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT MAKES FIRST JOB MATCH IN EAGAN

It's time-intensive, close to home, and, most importantly, passion-oriented. Knowing that a person's primary interests are a top motivator, ProAct's Customized Employment gets participants talking with employers who want to listen.

Example: a man with a disability is "bonkers" over frisbee golf. A ProAct job developer sets up informational interviews at two Twin Cities stores selling frisbee golf products. After the interviews, both stores offered to create a position for him and to provide training. Unlike answering a want ad or applying online, the man's hobbies and interests drove the process and created the opportunity. The process vastly increased his drive, and employers took note.

The difference with Customized Employment is the time it takes, explains job developer Lisa Janssen. She spent 10 to 15 hours a week assisting James Glisky, the first job placement for the program. Glisky, who drives and is employed in-center at ProAct, has a technical certificate for printing press operation. Janssen said he's very independent and motivated.

After an informational interview at Sears, Janssen noticed a difference when Glisky interviewed with PetSmart. His face lit up. He's an animal lover, and found the Eagan staff to be friendly. They met with managers, who took an interest in the candidate. Afterwards, he was asked to fill out an application as a qualifier for a customer service job.

There are several things he can do to assist the store, Glisky said. And, he'll receive job coaching and added support as needed. After 90



James Glisky, above right, is the first ProAct job placement through the new "Customized Employment" program, which gauges interests, promotes strengths and holds informational interviews with employers for solid matches.

days working, he's turned back over to his ProAct case manager. If for some reason it's not the right fit, his team can provide support, said Janssen. ProAct will continue to support his interests.

ProAct Vocational Coordinator Heather Deuschlaender said the hope is to find a job by the fourth or fifth informational interview.

This unusual, or perhaps more foundational approach, helps participants with disabilities to navigate dramatic changes to what had become traditional job roles, she explains. Thrift store stockers, for instance, have to be able to run a cash register as well.

Today's job candidates must be able to perform multiple tasks that used to be spread out under different job titles. The customized approach helps, and Deuschlaender said she's excited to see what job developers are finding.

Motivation is a powerful ingredient, and Janssen said she enjoys helping people who have it. Janssen sometimes starts with smaller companies and branches out.

Customized Employment can run 6 to 8 weeks, or up to an entire year. Skills are verified and potential employers identified, Janssen said.

Deuschlaender said trainings have emphasized "job carving," a "person-centered" approach. Much more than work, it's about things people like to do. Dakota County Social Services is very excited about the program, she said.

Some may start their own businesses, such as one person outside of ProAct who made flower arrangements and delivered them to area restaurants.



The faces of Customized Employment at ProAct in Eagan, combing neighborhoods, determining interests and even working with employers to create jobs for people. From left are Courtney Gehl, Tess Caskey and Lisa Janssen.

From the President...

I am pleased to report that ProAct ended its fiscal year in a good position, and that our mission based activity continues to be vigorous and varied. Our focus on strategic goals and efficiency has brought rewards.

We have been increasing our efforts to find additional work opportunities for the people we serve, and a few new developments should prove to be a good fit. We expanded our "customized employment" approach considerably, and partnered with the Recycling Association of Minnesota, the Minnesota Beverage Association and Minnesota Waste Wise to collect, sort, and sell recyclable materials from community businesses. Both of these initiatives add job options for our participants, and with recycling, advance an effort to protect the environment.

Challenges remain in finding the desired employment opportunities for all the individuals we serve and we have added staff to work in this area. There are some early signs of success, but it will require a long term approach to fully meet everyone's needs in this area. I believe there will always be a need at some level to train, employ, and advance employment for people with significant disabilities. We will continue to work diligently in this area.

ProAct has received its full report

and its programs have been accredited for the maximum three-years by CARF, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. A three-member survey team performed a thorough examination of ProAct programs and



performance in the spring. Working with our board of directors, ProAct continues its focus on our strategic plan, seeking new ways we can serve people with disabilities and help them achieve richer and more rewarding lives. Additional services would be in harmony with ProAct's core values.

The ProAct Golf Classic, our only fundraising event of the year, is fast approaching and I hope to see many of you at the Hastings Country Club on Monday, August 13. It's a fine course and fine dining, so we would love it if you were able to join us. It promises to be a great event. We also look forward to our annual client banquets, honoring the achievements of participants in Eagan, Red Wing, Zumbrota and Hudson. These are highlights of the year, enjoyed by consumers, families and staff. Thank you for your continuing support.

Steve Ditschler
Steve Ditschler

LIFE OPPORTUNITIES FINDS MORE WORK

Many employers in the Hudson, Wis. area are getting to know Kailey Singleton, and some, to her delight, are hiring individuals from ProAct.



Kailey Singleton matches ProAct individuals with employers who have a need, and found an independent position for Charlie Casarez, below left, at a hardware store in Somerset, Wis.

The job developer with ProAct's Life Opportunities program marked a significant milestone in recent weeks, placing an individual in a position at a hardware store in Somerset. Earlier, Singleton had provided job coaching at a nearby grocery store and helped with his job search. She awaited word on a second job placement in River Falls.

"Kailey has really gone to bat for people," said Hudson Program Coordinator Teresa Ducheneaux.

Matching people's skills and interests with employer needs, she covers a large area, one where she grew up and that she continues to call home.

Walk-ins at area employers have helped her to better connect



with businesses, where she introduces pre-qualified candidates to managers and owners. Many find it hard to argue with her contagious excitement, and ProAct's support.

Highly supportive, the nonprofit offers job coaching and on-the-job and job preparation training, freeing up other employees to focus on their tasks, she explains.

At times, employers can get certain images in their mind about people with disabilities, Singleton said. There's a wide range of individuals in terms of capabilities and some are able to drive themselves to work.

Overall, Singleton says she's been well received. "They (employers) seem really interested and happy to hear that there are programs like ours ... that Hudson has its own."

She credits her success to the one week Job Developer Bootcamp in Madison, where she learned from three experts in the field, each with 20 years of experience. Business tours of successful placements, combined with lectures and discussion, helped to create a successful pitch on hiring people with disabilities.

It is clear that ProAct's name is gaining attention in the Hudson community.

Groomed to lead, from page 1

People come in here who don't even want electronics, to kill time, look around, Simpson said. Nine times out of 10, he has them walking out with a product they bought. "I've always been a salesman." He once made antivirus software from his home and fixed computers.

Simpson has earned high marks, Barkla explained. "He's a wonderful and very bright young man."

Simpson said Walmart is not the only electronics game in town, but it's the biggest and the best.

APPROACHING 20TH YEAR, ZUMBROTA FACILITY VISIBLE, ACTIVE

ProAct in Zumbrota, the small southern Minnesota operation from which the name for the overall organization emerged, is starting its 20th year.

The community of 3,200 has watched as ProAct provided services from its downtown base and worked to integrate people with disabilities into public life. Across the street, in the alley and down the block, business employees interact with people from ProAct, and seem pleased that the program is there to help.

One bustling hub is Casey's General Store, where Manager Kembee Krueger often addresses ProAct consumers who come in by name and creates a fun atmosphere. "They like it if you really recognize them," she said. "We give everybody crap here when they come through these doors, nobody's exempt, we treat them all alike." Krueger said she remembered



Above, consumer Don Knowlton visits with human service technician Tim Peterson and waves to people in front of ProAct's facility in Zumbrota. At right, grocery manager Sherie Majerus often sees ProAct staff and consumers in her store



Above, Casey's Manager Kembee Krueger, right, and clerk Stacy Boothe often visit with people from ProAct.



being featured on these pages years ago with someone from ProAct.

"I think people are more accepting now," with more community integration, said ProAct human service technician Elaine Christianson, and they do say hello.

Across the street, at the Zumbrota News Record, receptionist Virginia Schmidt watches ProAct consumers through her front window. They relax on a front bench, and sometimes,

they stop in.

Zumbrota's distance from other urban centers has supported the survival of many traditional small town stores. At the grocery behind ProAct, Hub Food Center, General Manager Sherie Majerus and the cashiers often see and interact with ProAct consumers and staff. The manager said it's a really good thing to have a place (or program) for people with disabilities. The grocer employs 50.

A rotation ensures that all ProAct staff members take people out into the community, said Site Manager Jo Erickson. When the program began here, all of the consumers had medical needs that required specialized services. Today, the Zumbrota program also includes consumers from the Red Wing location who are transported in on a rotating basis. And, as for the name, ProAct was the name of a onetime program in Zumbrota.

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

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.

SELF-ADVOCACY GROUP OFFERS VOICE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Helping others to help themselves is a focus for Eagan participant Mike Williams, who has been trained in self-advocacy and is eager to share what he knows with others.

Williams said he wanted to start an advocacy group for participants at ProAct for a long time, so he contacted Arc Greater Twin Cities. "I wanted to teach them what I know, all about what self-advocacy is ... to build their self-confidence," he said.

The thought: people with disabilities need to be active in self-advocacy, and can accomplish more together than they could separately. Working with Adult Day Services Case Manager Mark Gonnella, from concept to conception, thus began the group Supporting Our Abilities and Rights (S.O.A.R.)

Williams hopes to grow the group of about 10, which meets twice a month to discuss current challenges and increase self-confidence. He has been a speaker at area schools, is a graduate of the Partners in Policymaking® training program and an active member of the Arc.

Before a recent S.O.A.R. meeting with Carolyn Dobis, director of programs and services, Williams and the group received some coaching from Case Manager Mark Gonnella. He's encouraged the group to stay positive when

talking about hot button issues, such as training and work.

"If consumers want something changed, they must also advance ideas about what change they want and how to achieve it," Gonnella said.

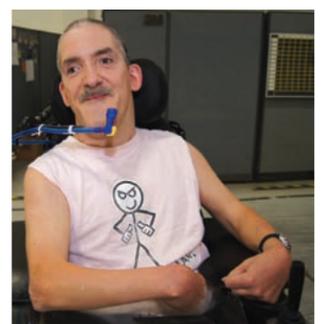
Speaking to the group, Dobis said training helps consumers to be ready for integrated work settings in the community, and that those jobs now demand more from people. Williams asked for more computer-based learning, and Dobis responded that computer labs are functional and available for their individual use and for classes.

Leaders are also working to find more work and higher wages, she said. "A lot of the jobs we used to do are now automated, for cheaper labor," Williams said.

Dobis also reiterated to the group that ProAct's staff is available for people in the programs, and advocating for them.



Eagan participant Mike Williams leads the newly created S.O.A.R. group, Supporting Our Abilities and Rights, which meets regularly to discuss ways to improve training and work opportunities. He is a graduate of the Minnesota Partners in Policymaking® program and has served Arc in different capacities.



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.

GRIDIRON THEIR TURF, TEAM STATS THEIR OWN

Participants in Eagan are learning firsthand about the glories of on the field battle in classic American football, and following their own statistics. The only things missing are the tackles.

Using NFL team names, ProAct football league standings are detailed on a poster outside case manager and quarterback Perry Thrun's office. He leads the off-campus class.

Classic Packers vs. Vikings rivalries are there, with the Saints and 49ers inserted into the mix to stir the pigskin pot. The case manager also posts tackles, sacks, touchdowns, interceptions and field goals.

Team competition drives the interest, with mental acuity and job focus as a couple of the side benefits. Players are responsible for remembering key stats.

Four teams of three players each compete, over two 45-minute halves.

"Go long this time," said Thrun to an offensive teammate, before one runs in for a touchdown at Veterans Memorial Community Center in Inver Grove Heights. The case manager hopes to grow the group to six or eight teams soon.



Case Manager Perry Thrun, center, gathers competitors against the Vikings for his touch football class in Inver Grove Heights. At left is player Chris Macy, with Rachelle McKinley at right. Stretching and warm ups precede rapid indoor play, with Thrun serving as quarterback for both sides.



PROACT BRIEFS:

Radio commercial attracts ProAct voice talent



Heidi Magnusson was recommended by Minnesota Special Olympics for a role in a radio commercial featuring a person with a disability.

She's spoken before large audiences, tried her hand in play performances and last minute speeches. Now, Eagan consumer Heidi Magnusson may soon be on the radio in an insurance advertisement.

A referral from Minnesota Special Olympics led to an audition, and she later received a call while in the car that the job was hers. "I got the real thing, and I got paid for it," she said.

The insurance commercial says don't sweat the small details and enjoy your life, as Heidi is in the background sharing her enjoyment for a baseball game, hot dogs and home runs, explained her mother, Jana Magnusson. Heidi memorized the lines beforehand. "She does not have one shy bone in her body. She just relishes it ... she loves it," said Jana.

Tapemark and others provide support for ProAct

ProAct received \$9,345 from the Tapemark Charity Pro-Am golf tournament in June, a figure that includes 36 matching gifts.

Raffle tickets designated for ProAct totaled \$220. For all charities combined, the Charity Challenge raffle competition raised \$49,188, which included \$15,000 in matching funds from Staples Financial.

Other major contributions came from local Lions clubs, Knights of Columbus chapters and VFW posts, totaling more than \$10,500 in donations.

Other contributors making substantial donations included the Hudson Daybreak Rotary Club, \$2,500, and the AnnMarie Foundation which gave ProAct \$2,938. ECM Publishers gave a generous gift of \$1,741.

Mark calendars for banquets

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

Prep for Nascar ride of his life

Mike Blocker with ProAct in Eagan started following NASCAR heavily in 2005, and will soon be riding along at 170 mph in one of the race cars.

He's joining his physical trainer, Paul Stein, who is also a fan, at the Chicagoland Speedway. Stein has taken Blocker to NASCAR events in Michigan in the past, and will actually drive a race car at the Chicago session.

Blocker's mother, Mary, set up the event through NASCAR Racing Experience. Her son not only watches the races, but tracks when drivers are practicing and qualifying. "It's just his thing," she said.

Wills and trusts topic of disability education event

Trusts, wills and other financial matters are the hot topics at the upcoming SAGES event at Christ the King Church in Bloomington, from 1 to 3 p.m. October 26.

An area lawyer is speaking about the well-informed financial decisions that are crucial to a secure future for a loved one with a disability. Topics include:

- The differences between special needs trusts and supplemental needs trusts.
- The "how's and why's" of setting up a trust.
- Wills, power of attorney and rep payee.

RSVP by October 23, with Gina Carpenter gcarpenter@bloomington.k12.mn.us, or call (952) 681-6122. The cost is \$15 at the door and includes refreshments. Sages workshops are for self-advocates, family members, caregivers and service providers of people with disabilities.



INDEPENDENCE IN SIGHT, AFTER 12 YEARS

From the work crew to the restaurant floor, Denny Lee is happy to report that his first independent job in many years is working out well. McDonald's managers in Hastings agree.

Dining room cleanup demands close inspections, and Lee knows when things are out of place. The same goes with condiments.

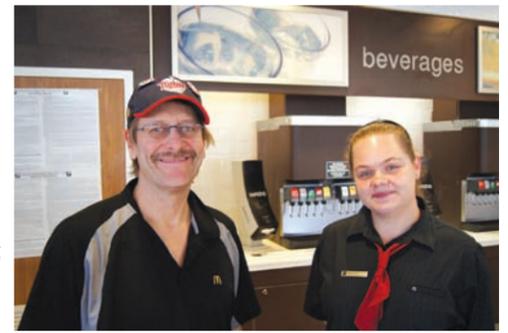
Many years prior, before having physical and intellectual difficulties, Lee had been the general manager of a plumbing company, where at times he had to handle challenging customers. "I tried to please them, because I'm a people pleaser," he said.

First Assistant Manager Kelly Franklin said Lee is very friendly, upbeat and does what they ask. Lee covers extra tasks, stays busy and lets managers know if something looks odd, she explained.

The difficulties are different now, but his attitude is the same. Cleaning during busy lunch hours and messes made by children are his responsibility. "Sometimes I see that they (parents) have their hands full so I ask if they need some help," said Lee.

The part-time opportunity arose when a regular employee needed a knee replacement, but had not returned after three months. Lee wants to stay on. "Either way I've got one heck of a foot in those doors," he said.

Lee laid the groundwork for the job through production work at Anagram and cleaning experience at Hilton Garden Inn in Eagan.



Denny Lee does great work for First Assistant Manager Kelly Franklin, at McDonald's in Hastings, and has hopes that the temporary job will turn permanent.

He continues to supplement the McDonald's job with work through ProAct. He said his goal is to make more money, move up and position himself better.

The major restaurant chain offers benefits to employees who work 20 hours or more per week.

Lee's wife notices the pride he's shown in having an independent job. "I just look and see what has to be done and do it," he said.

To counter the calories of the regular free meals, Lee makes his way to the YMCA for a workout after hours.



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.

WORK EXPERIENCE LEADS TO WELL PAID POST

Experience working at a bustling ProAct work location in Eagan came in handy for Andy Kramer, who secured a weekday second shift cleaning position at the Dakota County Government Center in Hastings.

Visitors who make it past security will notice large open spaces where people wait for courtrooms, pay fines and do other county business. The observant will also see that their surroundings have been deep cleaned. Kramer removes the furniture to clean areas, handles garbage from the courtrooms, tidies up the jury rooms and a children's area. He likes the atmosphere, and the people.

Each floor of the building has logs where county employees can leave requests and comments, said Todd Hilgert, supervisor with Osland Janitorial, the contracted company that employs Kramer. The process of interviewing and selecting employees goes somewhat by instinct, he explains. "The building is rather large. It's huge," said Hilgert. "You get a feel for somebody whether they'll work out."

New employees often come in for orientation before

they start. After a week or two, they're cleaning on their own, then he checks progress. Kramer requires minimal supervision. "It's so big you can't just sit and babysit one person," said Hilgert.

"We have other people, and I have an area I'm responsible for myself."



Trust levels here are high. As cleaning staff dust, they're not to touch anything on employee desks, Hilgert explains. Kramer is positive and has a good attitude, the supervisor said. "He's happy to be working." The position has allowed Kramer, who lives in Hastings, more time with family as he was able to quit a weekend post at a Dakota County library. He had also worked at Rapala in Eagan.

So good was Kramer's performance that when he suggested his fiancée for a similar position, the company hired her, as well. The jobs pay more than minimum wage.



The county halls of justice are Andy Kramer's evening duty, where he cleans with almost complete independence after earning the confidence of his supervisor.

FIND US ON FACEBOOK

Watch for updates and "like us" after searching for ProAct, Inc. on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/proactinc).



CLARIFICATION



In the last issue of People Achieving, ProAct client Chris Blanchard was featured with Case Manager Brandon Mellett, who was assisting him with a job search. Blanchard later found a position on his own at a Little Caesar's.



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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.

FALL DESIGNS FOR BIRD SEEDS

Life Opportunities participants in Hudson are busy creating new decorative bird feeders for the upcoming seasons, thanks to recent grants from the AnnMarie Foundation and Hudson Daybreak Rotary Club. New designs include fall leaves and Halloween ghosts! Visit ProAct's website for ordering information: www.proactinc.org.



Reliable, Responsible, Flexible: Your Team

Call Us: Eagan: Cathy McCoy 651-289-3170 or Greg Pechman 651-289-3157
Red Wing: Kyle Adams 651-388-7108 Hudson: Teresa Ducheneaux 715-410-4216

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Providing a reliable workforce for over 40 years.

FORESIGHT, AWARENESS KEY TO FUTURE

ProAct is a much larger, and more effective organization than it was in the mid-1990s, when board member Marty Stapleton played a role in shaping its expansion.

The board serves as a type of rudder for the nonprofit, assisting the CEO and helping to keep it headed in the right direction, Stapleton explained. "But, the heavy lifting is done by Steve (Ditschler) and his staff, there's no question about that," he said.

Through strategic planning and other sessions, the group tries to look about five years ahead and foresee issues down the road, said Stapleton. The process is more visionary in nature, rather than a nuts and bolts approach. It's a big picture perspective, explains Stapleton.

The veteran board member said many talents with the group mesh well together, gathering the different areas of expertise. "It's very cohesive and collegial," said Stapleton. "Everybody's trying to pull the same rope, so to speak."

He's found the staff who do the day to day work to be top notch. Their

involvement with ProAct participants is family oriented, one where each person is made to feel welcome and helped to be as effective as possible, Stapleton explained. There are people with disabilities who have utilized ProAct for more than 30 years. "It's a really valuable service to these people and I think the clients really enjoy it."



A stalwart supporter of ProAct, board member Marty Stapleton contributes his legal expertise.

That said, the biggest challenge the nonprofit faces is the prospect of state and federal funding cuts. ProAct will need to find a way to maintain the same level of service despite these challenges, explains Stapleton. Large government deficits are well known, and in many cases, leaders view social services as an area they can cut, Stapleton said.

The board member said supporters can help by letting others know that ProAct and others like it perform an important function for society. "To have the visibility ... so people are aware that you can't just gut the whole system and expect our clients, the people

that we serve, not to have anything, not to have a place to go, the ability to train, to be able to work and find meaningful lives."

PACKAGING PARTNERSHIP PRODUCTIVE

A two week, pre-Christmas job for a crew that began last November has turned into one of a shining example of what's possible when people with disabilities are called on for urgent tasks.

Asset Marketing had considered hiring temporary workers, but instead chose the flexibility of ProAct and its work crews. It took but one day for crew members to catch on, recalls Asset supervisor Amy Wenstrom. By the second day, team members were packaging twice as much product in the same amount of time. The quiet, productive environment helps.

Production like this requires concentration and focus, qualities that workers seemed well aware of on a 5,000



ProAct Site Supervisor Carmella Taylor and Asset Marketing's Inbound Fulfillment Manager/Quality Specialist Amy Wenstrom supervise teams to package fast turnaround products for Stauer in Burnsville.

piece job. Some could earn nearly three times the minimum wage on a per piece basis. Consumers inspected and packed watches in gift boxes for Stauer, which markets reasonably priced luxury items. The ProAct crew knows

if the company is behind in shipping orders it should press forward to create a product surplus for use as needed.

ProAct's production supervisors "do a great job of working with them, ensuring quality, getting all the components done and placing them into boxes," Wenstrom said.



ProAct's employees carefully inspect and package Stauer products for shipment.