



PRODUCTION FIXES MATCH CAPABILITIES



Erica Jepsen removes water bottles to be modified and repackaged for sale. Dozens of people with disabilities worked on the large job.

Companies are finding that there are ways to correct mistakes in production jobs, even if they involve extensive handwork and help from customized machines and jigs.

ProAct has held a steady market position in these fixes and modifications for years, and thrives on figuring out ways to better package products to meet the goals of retailers and marketers alike. Jobs that some consider as headaches and unworkable are welcome challenges here.

In Red Wing, participants have been tasked with inspecting products for damage and making simple repairs. Sometimes, it's as simple as applying a new label to correct a misprint. "It's always something unique and something new," said Coordinator Roxie McGrath. "We excel at new challenges."

Visitors to ProAct's Eagan facility are likely to find dozens of pallets in the warehouse with similar products that need packaging changes.

See Production, page 2

NEW INTERN PROGRAM LEADS TO PERMANENT HIRES AT RETAILER

A new internship program is building confidence in ProAct job candidates, and at one retailer, it's led to three permanent hires.

Covered through federal stimulus dollars, the arrangement pays for 520 intern work hours, at between 10 and 40 hours per week for those who qualify, with hopes that participants will land permanent jobs as a result. Toward that end, a retail clothing and household goods store in Eagan has hired three individuals through the intern program, which allows people to be trained in thoroughly before they're hired to permanent positions.

Among them is Rosa Varela, who can perform any task that's needed in the stock room. At previous jobs, in a fast food and factory environment, she struggled with shyness and a fear of asking questions. All of that has changed.

"The bosses here are really reasonable," Varela said. Expectations are high, but attainable. "You can work as fast as you want to work," said Varela. "You have to be pretty fast here, but they don't try to rush you."

Her diplomacy and ability to work with others have improved since she started with the intern program. "This is the longest that I've kept a job," she said.

Varela said she's learned a great deal through demonstrations, and credits ProAct Vocational Specialist Leann Prins, who provided job coaching in the early

stages. This improved her confidence, as Prins commended her for quality work.

"We felt she would be a good fit because she did so well there," said Prins. Under the intern program, the new hires receive some follow up and coaching for 90 days, she explained.

Varela's accomplishments don't go unnoticed. "We knew before we



Rosa Varela has found new confidence after learning all the stock room jobs at a busy clothing and household goods retailer in Eagan. After working as an intern, she was hired for a permanent position.

hired her that she was dependable and is good at what she does" said coordinator Beth Wyatt at the store.

The new hire moved to Minnesota from Tennessee two years ago. "I had a rough life growing up, but I got in contact with my dad and he helps me a lot," said Varela. Now, she enjoys getting up to go to work, and feels better when she returns home after her shift. Her two daughters are happier, too, she said, because their mom is happy.

Another recent hire through

See Interns hired, page 2



Kim Beam had a workplace assessment a year ago and an internship for several months before being hired by an Eagan retail store. She enjoys working with a product line that changes constantly.

PROACT HOSTS INFORMATIVE CARF ACCREDITATION GROUP SEMINAR

Quality surveyors for disability service organizations came together at ProAct in Eagan for a training session with a director from CARF, the international accrediting group that reviews rehabilitation facilities.

The continuing education seminar for CARF (the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) keeps surveyors abreast of changing CARF standards, and looks to the frequently cited measures so surveyors can provide more consultation and training, explains CARF Director and instructor Paul Andrew.

Surveyors took a look at some of the national issues and provided Andrew with feedback, even offering suggestions to CARF for improvements.

There are more than 50 CARF surveyors of all types in Minnesota and over 1,500 surveyors worldwide. Surveyors are involved



The session was led by Paul Andrew, managing director of Employment and Community Services for CARF, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

in three to five surveys per year on average, according to Andrew.

In speaking of their findings, he said the common factors among strong organizations are good governance, visionary leadership, multiple funding sources and a willingness to

try new ventures or business enterprises.

In a consultative fashion, CARF surveyors help community organizations stay focused on people and families, build services to meet needs and manage the business, explains Andrew. Successful disability provider groups are able to maintain a stable and responsive service, according to Andrew. They also participate and influence the community so people can become more involved. In this way, people are able to participate in more daily activities of their choice in community settings, he explains.

The director often asks the surveyors who are involved in the delivery and management of services, "Why do you do this?" Most do it because they learn so much and can then apply this learning in their own settings.

Andrew's training tour has covered multiple Midwest cities. He holds about 15 sessions of this type per year.

PROACT NOW ON FACEBOOK



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From the President...

The final gavel has sounded in St. Paul and legislators headed home and though sleepy, they completed their budget work. The broad spending plan was agreed to by the governor and legislative leaders in a late night session and ratified by members before noon the next day, to the relief of many.

For ProAct, the action essentially retains the cuts in program funding imposed earlier, but it did not result in additional reductions for the majority of the revenue we earn by providing services funded through government sources. While this has required some adjustments on our part, the funding levels are manageable.

ProAct's ability to persevere in such circumstances is a result of years of focus on operating efficiently, together with the positive interaction between the participants in our programs and the staff. We are proud that we have been able to maintain desired services while dealing with the impact of the weak economy.

Demand for the services that ProAct provides continues to be strong, with services delivered out of our Eagan location facing capacity issues, while Red Wing, Zumbrota and Hudson/River Falls continue to operate at reasonable levels. We continue to modify our service options in response to our current operating environment. The slow economy has had an impact on job placements in the community and with facility-based contract work. I am pleased, however, with the new accounts that have been developed and we look forward to growing these jobs in the future.

Given the increase in requests for our services in Eagan, we are exploring possible solutions that would enable us to accommodate more individuals. We hope to move forward in this area in the near future.

As we move ahead, I am determined that we continue with our spirit of innovation and a commitment to continuous improvement. This has been a significant contributor to the success we have achieved and will do much to assure our future.

As a final note, we continue to refine and update our website and I urge you to visit www.proactinc.org and see for yourself. There is always something new going on at ProAct.

ProAct values your support and is dedicated to fulfilling its mission to serve people with disabilities. Thank you for your help in making ProAct a creative, efficient and strong organization devoted to service.




TRANSITION GRAD ADAPTS, THRIVES ON EAGAN WORK FLOOR

Former transition student Grethe Bue was new to ProAct last year, and wasn't sure about it at first. What would the environment be like ... the work setting?

Less than a year later, she's impressing managers, increasing her productivity and making new friends.

"Just having purpose is a huge thing for anybody," said Bue's mother, Evonne. As part of a reinforcement plan, the younger Bue started filling out an Excel chart to record her tasks. She also welcomed the possibility of a monthly lunch with her case manager, Jessica Horne. These luncheons are used as rewards for work place improvement.

With these incentives now fueling Bue's daily drive, her production supervisor, Doug Strom, quickly noticed a change. "What in the world's going on here?" he said.

While Bue was once fearful of working the ConAgra product packaging line, now she jumps in frequently to help that team, he said. As

Strom watches her work, he knows he'll get questions later. "She asks me the next day what it (the number) was so she can beat it," he said.

Her work ethic has definitely improved, said Horne. "It's helped her to apply herself more at work," she said.

This newfound enthusiasm has been a dramatic shift for Bue.

"Before she started ProAct last summer, she didn't even want to get out of bed. She was depressed," her mother explains.

Job experience here isn't focused on production only. Relating to and helping coworkers is another emphasis. "I help a lot of people at lunch," said Bue. "One of my



Grethe Bue came to ProAct from a transition program, and, according to her supervisors, has adapted marvelously, increasing her production numbers and her job flexibility on the work floor.

friends is blind."

When the day ends, Bue often tells her parents about the results, and whether things were light or busy. She had gone from a four day work week to three, but is pushing to add that missing day back.

Bue's mother said her dream job would be to work at the Minnesota Zoo.

VOLUNTEERS EXPERIENCE PUBLIC SERVICE CLEANING PARKS, BEACH

Many park-goers in Dakota County and western Wisconsin are enjoying recreation areas free of debris and trash after volunteers from ProAct scoured the landscape for items to remove.

"It's not nice to litter, guys, right?" Eagan Supervisor Lori Ann Edd asks her crew at Eagan Central Park. The participants chose cleanup volunteer work from a list of classes and activities. Before venturing out with trash bags, these volunteer public servants toured the city's maintenance facility.

Edd said city staff members were surprised when ProAct picked this park because it's so large. Winding paths, black metal fences, large and small trees and bushes provide plenty of places for litter to accumulate.

Edd typically brings a crew of five to a park for pickup but at times has seven or eight individuals to keep on task. The crew often takes 30 minutes before lunch to review its progress. "They can reflect, and share their thoughts too and have a little cool down time," she said.

Park cleaning volunteers in Red Wing tackled the Bay City, Wis. beach, which is



At Eagan Central Park, above center, clients Michell Goldade, left, Mike Carlson, Vincent Yang and supervisor Lori Ann Edd get set up for volunteer cleanup with gloves and bags. Below, ProAct's Red Wing crews crossed over to Bay City, Wis. for beach beautification. At right, Billy Johns (foreground) rakes sticks and garbage as Marvin Gunderson heads off for another task.



located near a slough. Receding floodwaters in the village had left trash, sticks and larger branches strewn about, said Case Manager Tessa Langer. The two-day effort took 11 hours.

City Public Works Director Deb Gamble thanked ProAct in a letter. "I wanted to let you know how much we appreciated your time cleaning the beach and picking up trash. I've worked for the village for 12 years and the beach looks better this year than ever before."

Earlier, a ProAct crew of 12 picked up



parks in Ellsworth, Wis., and made quite an impression with the city, said Langer. "Word is spreading," she said. Plans were in the works for cleanup at the Goodhue County Historical Society, as well.

Interns hired, from page 1

the intern program is Kim Beam, who connected to ProAct through State Services for the Blind. Beam previously handled document imaging for a litigation support company, but the current environment seems to pass the time more quickly, she said.

Prins was also there for Beam to answer questions, check in and give tips. "She trained me on a lot of everything here. She

was a big help, that's for sure," said Beam. Along with the stability of a regular job, the new employee has found her coworkers to be helpful and nice. "It's been a good experience."

Beam works on the product showfloor on the weekends and handles returns from the front desk. She tidies up displays and matches shoes. "I like being up there (at the store's front). People ask a lot of questions and it's

nice to be helpful," she said.

Standing besides stacks and stacks of product boxes, Beam said she has the basic aspects of the job down, and that speed comes with practice.

A third ProAct intern, Paula Johnson, was also hired by the store. "Every one has been a great success," said Prins. Another intern is packaging products at an area warehouse.

Production, from page 1



This job involved 14,000 bottles of an olive oil treatment that needed a label modification and a tamper proof seal applied.

When companies have capacity problems, ProAct is often called on to perform detailed packaging work on a specific



A complex vacation package is assembled at ProAct in Eagan.

schedule.

"We're always looking for client work," said ProAct Eagan Sales Manager Randy Pettersen. In many cases, Pettersen does a lot of homework to set up a workable plan to complete a job in a timely and efficient manner.

Tall order for glass slippers



ProAct's Roxie McGrath, center, talks production with Jacquelyn Wingfield, owner of Diva Glass Slippers. ProAct in Red Wing cut and sewed her fabric creations, which cover wine glass bases. If sales of the product take off, ProAct could be cutting and sewing thousands of these for the Minneapolis company.

Accessible picnic table donated in client's memory



Participants, from left, Mary Fox, Gerald Nelson, Julie Stapf, Case Manager Sue Lowe, Jerri Mergen and John Hanneman surround the new table. It was donated in memory of former ProAct participant Nancy Kieffer, 52, of Lakeville. She spoke frequently about her family, said Lowe, who ate lunch regularly with Kieffer and some other participants. She made aprons, enjoyed crafts, and her foster home in rural Lakeville.

ProAct Board of Directors:

Charles DeNet, Robert Kincade, Paul Kramp, Mary Ellen Leary, Larry Lehman, James Louwagie, Teri McCloughan, Dr. Michael Nanne, Dr. Barbara Rebhuhn and Marty Stapleton.

Cleanup goes medical route toward free care

Red Wing residents like ProAct's Del Cook will remember the former emergency room at what was St. John's Hospital. Cook has returned there—but this time to clean rooms with the participants he supervises.

Nearly a decade has passed since the building was used as a hospital, but a portion of the Fairview owned structure is now used for a free care clinic. Staffed by some 150 volunteers and two part-time employees, it provides individual care and medicines free of charge, said Clinic Director Julie Malyon.

The director said the arrangement with ProAct is a great partnership. The group provides a thorough cleaning on Tuesdays,



Free Care Clinic cleaners, above, from left, Shawn Theis, Deanna Oelkers and Rosa Melgarejo, with Supervisor Del Cook and Clinic Director Julie Malyon.



before the clinic opens for four hours of service.

The clinic plans to expand to include dental and mental health services. That could bring more opportunities for people from ProAct to help maintain sanitary medical environments.

TEACHING BY EXAMPLE, THEY PLAN VIDEO DEMOS

The best way to understand a job is to teach someone else, and clients in Eagan will have their chance in a video series that introduces new participants to daily life at ProAct.

Led by Case Manager Perry Thrun, the video production class begins with script writing. Thrun casts his students as workers in their routine environments who explain the



Case Manager Perry Thrun, left, drafts a script with client help for a video about work at ProAct in Eagan. Also, from left, are Michael Becker, Dina Scheffel and Mike Blocker.

rules and procedures they follow.

Human service technician Ashnee Egan urges clients to mimic the hand motions they use when working.

The group discussed using caution around forklifts, wearing closed toe shoes and when headphones are OK to wear. Timeliness and the use of cell phones were additional topics.

148-YEAR OLD CHURCH WELCOMES PROACT

Downtown Red Wing is something of a historic walk through 19th Century architecture, and ProAct participants have entered the heart of it, taking classes and cleaning functions to a church that serves as an example of small river town style and openness.

Christ Episcopal Church and its towering steeple rests among five other congregations a few blocks from the riverfront. People from ProAct, and others from the community, meet here for class functions, and a ProAct work crew makes the place presentable for churchgoers.

"We want to be a resource for people, for the Red Wing community," said Rev. Charles Uhlik, the church rector. The idea of having a central place for people from ProAct to meet for classes was appealing to ProAct and the church leader alike. They also clean the bathrooms, sanctuary, chapel, parish hall and Sunday school rooms. "That's a huge help. They're doing a very good job and we're very happy with their work and their diligence," he said.

Getting outside ProAct's walls to the ornate, dark wood bordered fellowship hall creates a different kind of comfort level. It's here where people can open up, be themselves and even discuss problems or issues they're having.

Goodhue County social worker Julie Bruns leads a class on mindfulness and relaxation. "What is an example of a life event that is stressful for you?" Group members call out answers: family members, wedding bells, daily hassles in life. "A life event can be stressful even if it's a positive event," ProAct Case Manager Trina



Christ Episcopal Church in Red Wing has become a familiar retreat for ProAct participants, with numerous classes and cleaning functions near the center of the historic downtown.

Marsh adds.

She listens to one participant share about her struggles. "It's a place to get away from work, open up and talk more about personal things," said Marsh. ProAct individuals work with staff members to develop personal life management and recovery plans.

"It's just renewed my confidence in the human spirit," said Uhlik. "It's been refreshing to me to get to know some of the clients."



Day training and habilitation participants discuss the Sea Wing paddle boat disaster on Lake Pepin where 98 people died in 1890. From left are Larry Dietrich, Jeremy Lundberg, Linda Weinmann, and Andraea Hessler.



Extended Employment participants, from left, Rachael Amacher, Janice Spooner, Patti Kennedy, Mary Nugent, Rebecca Holden and Cassie Morkwed.

PROACT PHOTO BRIEFS:

Two new buses on the way

Two 80 percent matching grants through the Minnesota Department of Transportation will soon bring two new buses to ProAct.



Parent donates vehicle



Saying she was glad to donate her car to ProAct, where her adult children receive good service, Gladys Aalgaard Olson donated her 1995 Chevy Lumina. The Red Wing facility will use it to transport participants. Tim Olafson, left, and Dean Reis took a look.

Ski and Bike Club provide exercise equipment in Red Wing

The ULLR Club in Minneapolis gave nearly \$1,000 for exercise bikes, a treadmill, basketball hoops and these balls, used for a "drums alive" exercise in Red Wing.



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MUSICAL TALENT TOUCHES LISTENERS

Timing and concentration are everything for musician and Red Wing participant Ron Hill, who often plays keyboard for his peers at ProAct.

"I play because it makes people happy. It makes me happy," said Hill, after an impromptu performance in Red Wing. He does a regular show at ProAct in Zumbrota on Fridays, where he also serves as a peer helper.

"The clients love it," said Site Manager Jo Erickson. "They are so relaxed and calm when he is here, we even have one client who will stand beside him and sing."

Music is like a drug, Hill said. As those in earshot enjoy, the perfectionist tries to avoid distractions that can throw off his chords. When his fingers dance on the keys for participants in Zumbrota, he finds the group prefers simple songs. From traditional, to classical, country and rock, Hill's talents are expansive.

"I came from a bluegrass family," said



Ron Hill plays a Willie Nelson rendition of "Tenderly" for DT&H participants in Red Wing. One Fridays, his calming melodies are heard at ProAct in Zumbrota.

Hill. The music maker got his start on the harmonica in 1974. Ten years later, he took up the electronic keyboard, and, in 2002, he started playing the accordion. His father played fiddle, banjo and guitar. Hill plays by ear, but his childhood ability to read music is coming back.

His father is from the Brainerd area, but Hill spent

much of his life in the west before moving to Minnesota in recent years. He used to play professionally in taverns.

"Maybe I can help somebody along," said Hill. "I'm not doing it just to look good. I'm basically a humble guy, outspoken but humble."

Hill said he likes ProAct, which gives people an opportunity to be productive and work with others. "This place gives you on-hand training," he explains. With three distinct jobs here, Hill said he feels right at home in ProAct's program.

Get to know us

Admission Information

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

Production Services

Eagan- Dave Cavalier
651-289-3158
Randy Pettersen
651-289-3157
Red Wing- Paul Rodewald or
Paul Mummert
651-388-7108

Need Employees!

Eagan- Catherine McCoy
651-289-3170 (groups)
Eagan- Heather White
651-289-3163 (individuals)
Red Wing- Jim Bohmbach
651-388-7108

Donation Opportunities

Heidi Anderson
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
N 8424 A 900th, River Falls, WI 54022



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.

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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 Minnesota's Twin Cities, in communities along the Mississippi and in southeastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

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, handeron@proactinc.org.

LEADER HAS PARENT PERSPECTIVE

As the only board member with an adult child who attends ProAct, Larry Lehman's commitment has not wavered, nor has his interest, even as he reached 13 years on the group's governing body.

After serving as secretary for several years, the retired bank executive from Kenyon is thrilled to play a part as ProAct explores service expansion and growth opportunities. He's been especially impressed with the expertise shared by fellow professionals on the leadership team.

"It's been one of my favorite boards, because I learn something every time I go there," said Lehman. The fact that other members do not have family members in ProAct's programs makes their contributions all the more meaningful, he said. Lehman's daughter, Kirstin, is a participant in Red Wing.

ProAct's economic stability has been refreshing to this board member, in



Larry Lehman has served as ProAct board secretary for many years and has a daughter who is a participant in Red Wing.

light of the recent challenges facing many nonprofits. ProAct's financial position allows the opportunity to provide more services and for a wider overall reach, he explained. "They're not standing still, but continually looking to improve and expand," he said.

The veteran ProAct leader also serves on a nursing home board, the endowment committee for his church and on the board of directors for Security State Bank of Kenyon.

Lehman often draws parallels between the nursing home and disabilities industries, though nursing homes tend to have more competition, he explains.

"It's a lot easier to operate from a position of financial strength than to be walking the line all the time," said Lehman. "That's what's so neat about ProAct."

Red Wing's director of programs, Sally Ogren, said Lehman has a good sense of the kind of support ProAct needs to thrive and the supports needed for the individuals served.

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Driven to win: new Red Wing job developer

On the baseball field, decisions about what to do next can change the entire course of a game. Similar principles apply to job searches, and new Red Wing job developer Jim Bohmbach is applying his years of HR and sports expertise to help individuals with disabilities find and keep employment.

"A lot of companies are short handed," said Bohmbach, who has spent most of his life in Red Wing. "They haven't replaced anybody for a long time and there's a lot of work sitting there."

ProAct's Red Wing Director of Programs, Sally Ogren, said the new job developer has an important combination of job experience, personality and integrity. "He's well known in the community, he understands our mission and he enjoys working with people," said Ogren.

Bohmbach served as a human resources manager for Red Wing Shoe for a dozen years, worked as a teacher's assistant at Red Wing High School and continues as head coach of the school's varsity baseball team. He's worked in human resources at group homes

and in youth programming at the Eagan YMCA, as well as serving as an assistant baseball coach at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.



Jim Bohmbach is a community veteran and a connected HR professional.

The employment world resembles the playing field as leaders pick out individual skill sets and strengths and then urge and persuade people to use them to the fullest, Bohmbach explained. Sometimes, it's just a matter of confidence. "I believe in positive reinforcement all the way," he said. Leaders have to earn the trust of the people they're trying to help, and that's why

the job development position also involves job coaching, he said. Bohmbach notes that the Red Wing community is very open to people with disabilities. After graduating from Red Wing High School in the 1970s, Bohmbach left Red Wing to study business administration at Minnesota State University, Mankato. He later earned a Bachelor's degree in business management from Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee.

SMOOTH, FAST PRODUCTION GETS NOTICED

A detailed letter from a major customer thanked ProAct for its responsive service after people with disabilities pushed a days long rush job through in one shift.

Capital Safety in Red Wing, a fall protection equipment manufacturer, can have rush jobs that come with little notice, but ProAct's crew is ready.

"Our customers were satisfied due to their efforts once again," said Capital Safety

Master Scheduler Cindy Cordes.

Site supervisors Tim Peterson and Linda Boraas arrive early each day to set up jobs for their ProAct crew, which can number as many as 20. Of these, two people might be doing the same thing, but on completely different products. Couple this with piece rate pay tracking and things can get complex.

"There's a lot of planning in the morning," said Peterson. When unexpected loads are added, he and Boraas spring into action. One goes for the material, while the other starts setting up the job, making labels and moving participants to that work

area. "We communicate pretty well," said Peterson. They also know the capabilities of each crew member. The ProAct leaders track production schedules weeks or even months in advance.

"We appreciate the wonderful job they do more than we often recognize," Cordes said. Del Cook, who fills in at Capital, said the jobs there are difficult to learn. "And, I consider myself a quick learner," he said.



Site supervisors Linda Boraas, left, and Tim Peterson, right, with Master Scheduler Cindy Cordes at Capital Safety in Red Wing.