



POTBELLY POSITIVE, TEAM MEMBER HAPPILY SERVES UP LUNCH

He's multi-faceted in his talents, and after 18-months on the payroll, no one can deny his commitment to the job. Potbelly associate Tim Nordstrom from ProAct greets guests at the Potbelly Sandwich Works in Eagan, and does all he can to prepare for and serve them.

"If I could find a store full of workers who worked as hard as Tim does, I could have half the staff," said Manager Robin Sutehen, who works alongside Nordstrom to prepare food for the upcoming lunch crowd.

Staying busy with food preparation, the 13-year restaurant leader shares the Potbelly mission, "To create Potbelly fans." Food service is at the center of this effort.

"People who are Potbelly fans enjoy working here and create a great work environment. They love this place and desire this place," said Sutehen. Nordstrom is obviously one of them.

Nordstrom had worked in a different restaurant before, but this one is far better, mostly because it's a less stressful environment, he explains. That's not to say that his duties are less difficult.

Though it's set up as a quick serve, Nordstrom works the dining area, taking



Tim Nordstrom's performance at Potbelly Sandwich Works resulted in rave reviews.

orders from people with physical disabilities. He refills soft drinks and gathers used packaging when people are finished.

"Tim has been a life saver," said Sutehen. When he completes a set of tasks, he asks the manager for others that need

doing. He'll clean the patio, change a light bulb, and, on occasion, even search for a customer's missing wallet.

"He absolutely loves his job and appreciates the team chemistry ... and wouldn't want it any other way," said Nordstrom's ProAct case manager, David Cho.

Arriving early for work each day after a 15 to 20 minute ride on a ProAct bus, Nordstrom may start right away, or wait until 10:30 or 11 a.m. to begin his shift.

Having ProAct staff members to call on has been great for Nordstrom.

"Especially if we have problems going on at work," he said. When Potbelly wanted him to start working nights, a time when Nordstrom didn't have transportation, Cho helped to communicate this to Nordstrom's manager.

Food is among the job benefits Nordstrom enjoys. What's his favorite sandwich? Tuna, with mayo, lettuce, tomato, pickles and Italian seasoning. With an employee discount of 50 percent, it's a hard value for Nordstrom to pass up. Aside from work, he's become a Potbelly promoter, steering sandwich connoisseurs to his brand instead of competitors.

EMPLOYERS OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED

For ProAct, employers and work are what make the world go around, and choosing three of its best is a prized tradition that continues in 2009, with the selection of three "Employers of the Year" by the Eagan facility.



Accepting the award for Business Partner Employer of the Year was Apothecary's Kent Halvorsen.



"Employers are at the heart of ProAct's mission," said ProAct President Steve Ditschler. "The work they provide is invaluable to ProAct's individuals, and we salute them."

The 2009 winners circle was rounded out by Apothecary Products, T.J. Maxx in Eagan, and Rapala's distribution center. Each was recognized before a crowd of 600 at ProAct's 37th Annual Awards Dinner at the Prom Center in Oakdale in early October.

The winners were chosen for three categories, Business Partner, Supported Employment and Community Employment categories.

The first Employer of the Year Award goes to Apothecary Products, a major pharmacy supplier based in Burnsville. Winning recognition in the Business Partner category, Apothecary utilizes ProAct for a substantial amount of work on a regular basis, said Dave Cavalier, ProAct's Eagan director of production services. The tasks fit ProAct especially well because they require people with different skill levels, Cavalier explained.

Apothecary's Kent Halvorsen, who heads the company's master scheduling and forecasting area, said ProAct has three primary strong points that have made an impression: its quality, communication and customer service, and the turnaround time for jobs. The nonprofit handles Apothecary products that help administer medications and vitamins.

See Employers of the Year, page 3

Demand for ProAct's Eagan programs surges, intake process heats up

With her notes on yellow paper close at hand, Intake Specialist Katie Mark prepares herself for what will be a very busy Eagan morning. Five new participants will be arriving soon, and it's her job to get them acquainted with their work and supervisors.

As the first point of contact, Mark has experienced a noticeable increase in new clients. Many appreciate the work that ProAct offers. ProAct in Eagan had well over 400 clients combined in DT&H and Rehab alone in September.

"We've had to add a new rehabilitation case manager," said Mark. "There are lots of people coming in."



Intake Specialist Katie Mark, above center, keeps an eye on ProAct's main entrance for more new ProAct participant arrivals while visiting with two new consumers, Michael Becker, left and Kathy Lea, right. At right, Mark demonstrates a sorting task for Scott Davis, another new participant.

Mark closely observes the new participants to gauge their comfort level coming in, and offer one on one assistance as needed. She points out the emergency exits

and bathrooms, introduces each new client's case manager and explains the workflow, class and schedule routines.

"The first day can be pretty scary for people—they're nervous," said Mark. Having met Mark at earlier meetings or on a tour, she's the familiar face they look for. She may well be the best at introductions, too, as she

knows almost all of the 500 people in the facility by name.

Once she gets the new person out on the workflow, she'll ask, "Are you OK if I leave you for a

little while?" Most consumers laugh and say yes, but some ask her to stay.



MAN'S NASCAR DREAM REALIZED THROUGH GENEROUS OFFERS FROM PERSONAL TRAINER

An invitation from a personal trainer turned into a dream come true for ProAct client Michael Blocker, who has been on two road trips to Michigan to watch NASCAR races and got close to some of the cars that thunder down the track.

In 2008, Paul Stein, Blocker's personal trainer at the Burnsville YMCA, decided to ask Blocker to come on a long weekend trip to watch NASCAR races in Brooklyn, Michigan, about an hour from Detroit. Rising above professional football and baseball crowds, Brooklyn's raceway can accommodate

160,000 to 200,000 fans.

"I thought, this could be the opportunity for the vacation of a lifetime for him," said Stein. Far from a casual observer, Stein describes Blocker as very well versed in the workings of a race, from pit stops to racing strategies. After a repeat race trip this August, Blocker's dream now comes true year after year.

"I was so amazed," said Mary Blocker, Michael's mother. "It's such a thrill for



Mike Blocker, right, and his personal trainer, Paul Stein, with the NASCAR pace car in Brooklyn, Michigan.

this kid." She told Stein, "You can't imagine how much this means to us."

Stein sees the races as serving a dual role, and uses pre-race preparations as a motivator for Blocker's physical training at home. It's a mile long walk from the campground to the stands, and his group climbs 400 steps to reach the seating area. Blocker has cerebral palsy. "It was important for him to be able to do that and he

See Race fan, page 2

From the President...

A review of activity in our 2008-2009 program year confirmed what all staff members already knew—ProAct is serving more participants than ever before. Between Eagan and Red Wing/Zumbrota ProAct has experienced growth of 8 percent, while Eagan alone served an additional 75 participants. This explains why staff are so busy and intake activities have grown. This comes against a background of a challenging economic climate.

ProAct has long emphasized efficiency along with effectiveness which has allowed us to meet some of the growing financial challenges. We continue to be in a stable position.

The sluggish economy has had other impacts: the number of employment opportunities in community settings has declined; job development has been more difficult; and procuring the right volume and variety of work to support our program objectives has been inconsistent. I fully expect that we will work through this challenging period. Securing employment and work opportunities is too important for the people we serve to not overcome these challenges in the long run. I am pleased that many companies continue to work with ProAct, and that significant work commitments have been received at both Eagan and Red Wing. Such news is always welcome, since it indicates more employment opportunities should be available for those we serve.

I am pleased that we have successfully launched a new service in the Hudson-River Falls area of Wisconsin that was named "Life Opportunities". The service was designed by parents and other interested community members as an alternative to existing options. It is action oriented with community based work, exercise, and leisure recreation components. We started small, with some five participants, but expect to see this innovative initiative grow steadily in the future.

ProAct's consumer recognition dinners hit new highs in participation and satisfaction among the people we serve. Approximately 600 people from the Eagan service area enjoyed an evening at the Prom Center in Oakdale, with KARE 11 anchor Rena Sarigianopoulos serving as emcee. Longtime special education teacher and ProAct supporter Dave Glover did the honors for the Red Wing service area held at the Treasure Island Resort and Casino with about 520 people attending. It is very gratifying to be of service to our program participants who work very hard to achieve their objectives; and very meaningful to be able to recognize them at these events.

Thank you all for your support.




ZUMBROTA MANAGER IS VETERAN IN FIELD

With most professions, it all comes down to experience and confidence. Throw in a strong dose of kindness and you'll find exactly what you're looking for in Jo Erickson, the new site manager for ProAct's Zumbrota location.

The new ProAct employee splits her time between Zumbrota and Red Wing, serving as a case manager for the latter with a limited consumer load. The travel and gear changing are not unusual for the seasoned social services veteran. She spent 13 years at a similar organization, where she last served as an area director for multiple counties. In 2001, she made a career change and took a position at the Red Wing Republican Eagle. The ProAct position, and a connection with HST Steve Whitmore in Red Wing, opened the

door for her to reenter the social service field.

Erickson said her success depends primarily upon the staff members who carry out the programs she's managing. "Good staff are really what keeps it going," she said, noting the vast experience of many frontline people at Zumbrota. Before taking on the manager role, Erickson worked alongside the Zumbrota staff for three weeks to better acquaint herself with the operation. One client was coming back after an illness, so Erickson was keeping a closer eye on her.

As proof to the stability of ProAct and its participants, Erickson has seen some of the same workers she had contact with in the 1980s and 90s.

When not focusing on people, Erickson tracks batches of paperwork with unfamiliar number codes and waiver systems she needs to relearn. She completes monthly, quarterly and semi-annual reports for her clients.

The hardest part of her role is watching clients react to the current downturn in work levels. "I think that's the worst, and it's sad," said Erickson. "The clients almost take it personally. It's hard to explain that it's not personal."



ProAct's Zumbrota location welcomed highly experienced manager Jo Erickson, who has 13 years in the field.



Zumbrota consumer Travis Meyers, left, spends a few moments with Erickson.



Erickson at work with staff and Meyers.

Donor shares reasons:

"I just think ProAct is a really good organization. I've worked with people who are challenged by disabilities and I saw up close the daily struggles that they face. ProAct performs a vital service to the community by giving people a chance to contribute what they can, based on their individual ability. I can't think of a better way to have people feel good about themselves than to work at something that gives them a purpose and feeling that they are contributing something to society."

—Ron McNamara, McNamara Insurance Services

Preventing Abuse and Neglect

Friday, October 23, 2009
1:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Christ the King Church, Fellowship Hall
8600 Fremont Avenue South
Bloomington, MN

Many families worry about abuse and exploitation of their loved ones with disabilities. The partners of SAGES invite you to a forum on how to make the community safer for our most vulnerable citizens.

The discussion will identify what abuse and neglect are, examine barriers to services and explore strategies for increasing the community's capacity to serve victims. Bring your questions and join us for this timely forum, which will feature panelists:

- Doug Annett, Director of Residential Services, Opportunity Partners
- Lieutenant Nancy Dunlap, City of Minneapolis Police Department
- Cheryl Kolb-Untinen, Legal & Support Services Manager, Cornerstone
- Lyndsie Standerwick, Community Educator, Neighborhood Involvement Program

Please RSVP by Monday, October 19, by contacting Gina Carpenter at The Learning Exchange at (952) 681-6122 or gcarpenter@bloomington.k12.mn.us. There will be a charge of \$15 per person for this event at the door. Please make checks payable to ISD #271.

Hosted by:

Sages
Sages
A collaboration of community organizations



Race fan, from page 1

especially has never been one to complain about anything," said Stein. "He dives in head first to get what he needs to accomplished."

Blocker's mother said Stein and his friends learned a lot from Michael, and had not known someone personally with a disability. After telling Stein about how wonderful the experience was for her son, he laughed and said Michael knows things

Blocker and Stein, left center, pose with their group of race fans on their annual trip to see NASCAR. Below, Blocker with Tony Stewart's #14 car, his all time favorite.



about racing that he and his race fan friends don't even know.

Blocker memorizes stats and car numbers. Tony Stewart is his favorite driver, and he often wears clothing to let others know about his passion.

'LOCKS OF LOVE' FOR CONSUMER, STAFFER

They're going to lose a lot of hair in a big hurry, so children struggling with disease can have some.

Red Wing consumer Kitty Halvorsen, who has nearly 20 years in with ProAct, and Eagan human service technician Anna Shields are donating their lovely strands to Locks of Love. The nonprofit group provides hairpieces to



Consumer Kitty Halvorsen and staff member Anna Shields will each donate 10 inches or more of their flowing long hair.



disadvantaged children suffering from long term hair loss due to a medically diagnosed condition.

Halvorsen's mother, Lois Sommerfield, said Halvorsen's cousin's son Griffen, 10, has leukemia, which makes the connection all the more personal. Both women have donated hair to the group in the past.

WISCONSIN PROGRESS: LIFE OPS IN PICTURES

At right, the Life Opportunities team descends on SORSA two days each week to unpack and organize restaurant products. Below, Ben Feia and Stephanie Briggs pet one of the horses at the stable as the three of them take a break.



Matt Harper lifts weights with his arms with help from human service technician LeAnn Mergens.



Above, Matt Harper enjoys therapeutic riding with help from stable owner Mary Lou Stuesser. At left, Briggs helps feed Jessica Stuesser to start the afternoon.



ProAct updates by e-mail You can read the latest from ProAct ... and soon receive program information and schedule changes by e-mail. Simply e-mail info@proactinc.org and indicate "Mailing List" in the subject line. Be assured this information will not be shared.



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.

Golf Classic nets \$16k for ProAct programs



At left, the winners of the 2009 ProAct Golf Classic at Hastings Country Club were, in back from left, Greg Hannon, Joe Wahl, Rob Armfield and Bob Reynolds, the team for TDS Metrocom. In front are organizer Cathy McCoy and ProAct President Steve Ditschler.



Above from left, relatives and friends of ProAct participant Kathy Thames, Ralph Davini, Chip Delaney, John Thames, John Neeser, Mike Johnson and Nick Rolfes. At top right, Rich Bordas, his son Richie Bordas and son-in-law Chris Kelly; Tim Dunleavy and Mark Kasner from Wells Fargo gave greetings and Anchor Bank's Merri Schriber putts with intensity.



Flu season: hygiene, habits to forefront

As flu season comes rolling in with a new threat, H1N1 or swine flu, personal hygiene and sanitary practices at ProAct become all the more important.

"People do not have immunity against H1N1 and the seasonal flu shot will not protect against it, said Registered Nurse Susan Van Overbeke at ProAct's Eagan location.

Vaccinations for H1N1 are beginning with health care workers first, she explained. H1N1 is different from the traditional flu virus in several ways. H1N1 risk categories track more towards younger rather than older

people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Even if a person believes he or she has already had H1N1, it may still be beneficial to receive the H1N1 vaccination, said Van Overbeke.

"Not all patients will be checked for H1N1 to confirm it or to rule it out, as some physicians will recommend to stay home to contain the spread, thereby bypassing a clinic visit," she said. Even patients tested for H1N1 have only a 60 percent accuracy rate for its diagnosis, she said. Van Overbeke always recommends checking with your primary medical doctor for a recommendation.



Jen Speikers cleans the door handles and buttons at ProAct in Red Wing to help prevent the spread of disease.

Employers of the Year, from page 1

"I hope our relationship in business keeps growing as they've been a good partner so far," he said.

Winning recognition for the Supported Employment category, T.J. Maxx in Eagan has maintained an eight-year relationship with ProAct. "They're always very caring and patient with our people," said Ken Gray, a ProAct coordinator of Vocational Services.

The off-price discount store that sells clothing and products for the home hosts ProAct job tryouts for multiple positions, including stocking, processing, fitting rooms, cashiering and building maintenance, said Gray. Several individuals from ProAct were hired for competitive employment positions by T.J. Maxx. Additionally, the store has employed people from ProAct in funded internships, temporary work assignments funded by Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

TJ Maxx Operations Manager Barbara McGregor said the store sets up a comfortable environment for ProAct individuals where they can learn new skills. "It's a win-win situation for both of us," she said. ProAct knows the store's business routines, its policies



Work pride, longevity on humane society crew



Led by site supervisor Carol Husman, right, the cleaning crew at the Minnesota Valley Humane Society continues a seven-year tradition of tidiness. From left are Jon Tuman, Patty Welters, Robin McLaren and Steve Tompkins. The cats are Dubbs and Jingles.

Steve Tompkins wants everything to be done just right, and if the veteran humane society cleaning crew member senses otherwise, he'll let people know.

Mopping the padded floor in the doggie obedience training room, Tompkins is a mainstay inside the decade-long work enclave at the Minnesota Valley Humane



Clockwise from left, Steve Tompkins takes great pride in his mop jobs; Patty Welters makes dishes sparkle and Jon Tuman shines window glass.

There's a sense of permanence here, and the cleaning crew responds well to correction and functions as a team, according to Husman.

Consumers Patty Welters and Robin McLaren switch off between pet dish and litter box washing and bathroom cleaning. Jon Tuman handles garbage and recycling, as well as window washing.

Husman said there's very little complaining, and that each crew member values the job. "If you want to stay here, well, you do what's asked of you," she tells them.

"They all know their jobs very well. I just have to make sure it's spic and span," said Husman.



Society (MVHS) in Burnsville. From cleaning dog dishes, to trash and restroom duties, ProAct's people help maintain a sanitary operation amidst the sound of barking dogs and other creatures.

At any given time, the shelter houses 30 to 150 animals, so there's no lack of cleaning work. "They all love it and I love it," said Site Supervisor Carol Husman. "I look forward to coming every day ... they are very, very good to us."

ProAct's clients enjoy being part of the animal shelter's team of employees, Husman explained. They're also proud of their work, and their paychecks.



Shelter Manager Kevin McDougal said the ProAct crew is fun to have around and is flexible. Participants also take part in staff pizza parties.

MVHS is planning to move to a more suitable facility in 2010. The current building will be remodeled by a church from Savage that is purchasing the property.

When the cleaning is complete at MVHS, ProAct's roving janitorial crew sometimes gets a chance to play with the animals. But on most days, they're off to another cleaning job at one of several area office buildings.

and procedures and people from ProAct are willing to learn something new when there are changes, the manager explained. "They work here like they're part of our store. It doesn't feel like they're separate because they've been here for so long," McGregor said.

Reeling in the win for the Community Employment category, Rapala and its Eagan distribution center were selected based on a strong connection with ProAct, one that has led to greater work variety for people with disabilities. "They've allowed us many opportunities to excel," said ProAct Employment Manager Catherine McCoy, "From simple packaging tasks to the assembly of various items for dealers throughout the U.S."

The distributor of fishing lures and other products manages about 10,000 different items, shipping them to the entire U.S.



KARE-11's Rena Sarigianopoulos, left, and ProAct Vocational Coordinator Ken Gray, right, congratulate T.J. Maxx's Barbara McGregor and Beth Wyatt, who received Employer of the Year Recognition for Supported Employment.

through its 130,000 square-foot Eagan warehouse, according to Rapala Distribution Manager Jim George. ProAct individuals work on packaging for products headed to 43 Walmart distribution centers.

"They're excellent in terms of communications," said George. "They have always been able to provide for our needs." Staffing flexibility has been a highlight for Rapala, which has hosted ProAct crews as large as 25, but typically employs a crew of 10. "I know we have a very good partnership and it's grown," George said. "We've got additional kits that we build now and we're very happy."

Get to know us

Admission Information

Eagan- Katie Mark
651-289-3151

Red Wing- Pamela Veith
651-388-7108

Production Services

Eagan- Dave Cavalier
651-289-3158

Red Wing- Paul Rodewald
or Paul Mummert
651-388-7108

Need Employees?

Eagan- Catherine McCoy
651-289-3170 (groups)

Eagan- Ken Gray
651-289-3163 (individuals)
Red Wing- Pamela Veith
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.



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

877-245-0405 toll free

Comments and alternative formats

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



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.

Maximizing Human Potential for Greater Self-Sufficiency

BOARD CHAIR ADVISES ON FINANCES

Since joining the ProAct board in the 1990s, Jim Louwagie has served on and off as chair for five years.

The 28-year banker, who currently serves as president of Anchor Bank in Burnsville, has used his fiscal experience well to benefit the nonprofit. In the for profit world, he works with a number of his business customers to help ensure that they're financially stable and viable. The same can be done for ProAct, he explains.

"We view the assets of ProAct not as our own," said Louwagie. "They're the consumers' and stakeholders' ... and we want to be sure to do the best job we can with the assets." Recent spikes in the number of new consumers coming in are a testament to ProAct's quality, the leader explained.



ProAct Board Chair Jim Louwagie.

Louwagie is especially proud of ProAct's high efficiency ratings. "The percentage of dollars going back to the mission is very high compared to other organizations," he said. He particularly enjoys the people and the positive attitudes and atmosphere at ProAct.

The board is always on the lookout for future ProAct opportunities to serve, Louwagie said. "We're constantly looking at other opportunities to expand our mission," he said.

The bank president has been a consistent attendee at ProAct's annual Golf Classic event, and this year placed third with his team.

He makes his home in Apple Valley with his wife, Julie. The Louwagies have two grown children who are attending college.

Stimulus paid summer youth program successful

A groundbreaking program to provide summer work to young people with certain risk factors has proven to have lasting benefits at ProAct in Eagan, where a few of the young participants are planning to return to work at ProAct.

ProAct's Summer Youth Work Program, funded by federal stimulus dollars, had two components, said vocational specialist Andrea Miller. Job experience and income were the first, while training and job readiness rounded out the second.

Of the dozen people involved, split between two five-week sessions, most were 17 or 18 years old, but some were 20 or 21, she said. Shifts were four hours per day.

To be considered, a young person must meet at least one of several criteria, a list that includes the presence of a disability or any of a number of other behaviors or circumstances, including: difficulty in

literacy, a high school drop out or drop out risk, runaway, homelessness, foster care, youth parent, or offender.

"There were some major changes in the way they communicated with each other as peers and coworkers," said Miller. The work was performed primarily on ProAct's Eagan workfloor. Sometimes, they worked alongside each other and regular ProAct consumers, explained Miller. They also had opportunities to get trained in as human service technicians (HST) in the Small Group area and to work one-on-one with clients.

One plans to return to ProAct as a HST over the Christmas holiday break and two others plan to work at ProAct next summer. Several were entering college this fall and some were about to begin their senior year in high school, Miller said. Two youths were considering vocational trades while two others were considering the IT field and one was joining the Navy. ProAct hopes to be able to offer the program in 2010, as well.



Abundant recognition: Red Wing, Eagan banquets celebrate achievements



Emcee Rena Sarigianopoulos from KARE 11 kept the crowd entertained.



Curtis Nancy, center, was one of three consumers to receive a 30-year Service Award. Cindy Ellingson and Mary Pat Myers were also recognized.



Above left, Steve Ditschler and Sally Ogren, in back, congratulate Glen Chapman, Kory Brunner, Art Stull and James Hawkenson for 25 years of work at ProAct in Red Wing.



Steve Ditschler addresses Eagan and Hudson/River Falls participants, staff and guests.



Wearing his ProAct jacket, Brian Anderson, standing with family members, was recognized for 15 years of work.



Red Wing's Darin Luhman celebrated 10 years at ProAct.



At the Red Wing banquet, Rachel Laust, left, is recognized for five years of service and Brandon Marcks enjoys the dance floor after the banquet.



Above, new Eagan consumer Scott Davis dances with an unidentified woman. At right, long time emcee for the Red Wing banquet, Dave Glover, congratulates Laurie Nasser for her 30 years with ProAct.

