



Inside:

- Red Wing rookies
- Multiple donors help out
- Intake leader helps all
- Garden signs debut

STEADY, HUMANE WORK ENGAGES IN RED WING

The joys of pet companionship are lived out daily by ProAct cleaning crews at the Humane Society of Goodhue County.

They've gotten to know the rotating collection of mostly cats and dogs, a bunny, and, on occasion, a homing pigeon, guinea pig or ferret.

Some animals are allowed to roam the open areas, where cats playfully jump and a black dog greets visitors and receives an occasional biscuit. When ProAct Supervisor Mary Derry and her crew arrive, the cats erupt into a chorus of meows.



Cleaning crewmember Kari Halpaus with ProAct in Red Wing enjoys seeing the puppies and mopping at the Humane Society of Goodhue County.

Teams of three cover the contracted job first thing each morning, freeing up shelter staff for other functions, explains shelter Director Anna Ostendorf. The daily cleaning work at the 75-animal shelter isn't enough to hire an additional staff member.



ProAct Supervisor Mary Derry, left, works quickly with siblings Mike and Kari Halpaus to clean cat litter boxes, mop floors and cover other duties.

The job is a bit more complex than others, as cats, their food and cleaning utensils have to be kept separate to avoid cross contamination, said Derry. In addition to being spayed and neutered, the creatures' food consumption is monitored and cats are tested for feline leukemia.

The cats in front are known by name. "They do have personality, every one of them," said ProAct's Mike Halpaus.

Derry helps out with one named Eleanor, which she calls a "wild woman, not a happy cat." The animal was traumatized and would bare its teeth and resist being petted, at first.

As the animals are displayed for adoption, keeping a clean and attractive facility with minimal odors is important for the people who visit, explains shelter Supervisor Amy Ritchie. And, people will

See Humane Society, page 2

People Achieving

FOR 21 YEARS, HER POSITIVE IMPACT ON COWORKERS SHINES

Casper's Cherokee restaurant in Eagan is a familiar establishment to many people with disabilities, who have found work opportunities and a committed boss who relates well to them.

The smile on Colleen McGovern's face, and the pride in her dishwashing and prep work, is a bit of an anomaly in the competitive restaurant world. And, she's done the job for more than 21 years. "Sometimes, it's crazy (busy)," she said.

Owner Rick Casper appreciates McGovern. "With Colleen, what people understand is what she adds, her humor, her willingness, her concern for everybody," said the restaurateur. "She makes my staff a better staff. They see her every day doing her best and the pride she puts into her work, that she places in her job."

McGovern peels potatoes, wraps potatoes for baking, wraps silverware and gets items for the servers. ProAct provides transportation to and from work and she



Rick Casper, owner of Casper's Cherokee Sirloin in Eagan, first saw the value of people with disabilities while volunteering at Camp Friendship in the early 1970s. He soon brought the idea to his family's restaurant in West St. Paul, and then, to his own, where Colleen McGovern, right, is one of many he's had on staff, and the second 20-plus year employee with a disability.

receives twice per month site visits from Case Manager Nicole Seeborg. That support has helped her to succeed, but there's something more that has caused her to thrive: the work environment created by Casper.

The roots of his heartfelt appreciation for people with disabilities started in the early 1970s, when he was a volunteer at Camp Friendship near Buffalo, Casper explains.

A little later, he joined the Peace Corps and later returned to work for his father at Cherokee Tavern in West St. Paul. That's where the idea to hire people with disabilities got its start.

"He saw me in that environment (Camp Friendship) and saw that I was very comfortable around (people with disabilities)," Casper said. Cherokee Tavern hired a person with disabilities and Casper has had several at his Eagan restaurant since then, two of them for more than 20 years.

McGovern's dependability and attitude made an impression on him. "I think she and I have a special bond. We communicate very well together. She teases me and I tease her. I think the staff sees that too," he said. Caring words are often exchanged, such as when McGovern's mother was sick.

Casper would frequently ask her how she was doing.

The ProAct consumer's concern for others finds other outlets outside of work, as well. She raised more than \$1,300 as part of a cancer walk, and regularly volunteers for the River Valley Project, a community education program for adults with disabilities.

ProAct Golf Classic August 19

Hastings Country Club

Live/Silent Auction

Lunch/Golf/Dinner

Limited Space

Prizes

Sponsorships Available



Register at proactinc.org or Call Cathy at 651-289-3170

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION PROVES VALUABLE FOR ALL AGES

Many people thrive in public settings, where shopping, snacking and socializing often converge, and ProAct's Eagan seniors group is no different.

"It's important for them to mix with the community," said ProAct senior life skills instructor Christine Peterson. Time spent with other adults is a great opportunity to practice appropriate interaction, street safety, rules and etiquette, she explains.

Consistent visits to places including the CHAP Store in Burnsville have gained ProAct seniors entry into an informal club of "regulars." Others are noticing.

"The people are so outgoing when they come in here. They're always friendly and there's always a smile on their face. They're lovable, is what they are," said Earl Huber, a thrift store shopper and volunteer who helps stock the bread racks.

Huber and other shoppers nibbled on pastries and drank coffee with the ProAct group before breaking away to browse the shelves. These events seem so normal, and that's by design, explains Peterson. Sitting in a non-classroom, non-work environment, and kidding around is what people do, she said.

The next step is to pursue volunteer opportunities at the store, and Peterson talked to one of the managers to see if help is



Life skills instructor Christine Peterson, right, leads a group of ProAct seniors to the CHAP Store. Below, volunteer and shopper Earl Huber, back right, visits with the ProAct group.

needed. "The seniors are very neat and tidy, very fastidious. They love to work and have good work ethic," Peterson said.

She has organized visits to Dodge Nature Center in West St. Paul, the new fire administration center and station in Eagan, the arts institute, science museum and other sites.



From the President...

Though evidence of spring was late in emerging, almost everything else has been running on or ahead of schedule. The Minnesota legislative session is in full swing and while some adjustments affecting providers such as ProAct may be expected, the challenges do not seem as daunting as last year.

Here at ProAct, activity continues at full speed, with an emphasis on increasing employment opportunities in the community for employees.

I am pleased that we have made some progress in this area, with new opportunities emerging in Eagan and Red Wing. We also are encouraged as ProAct becomes better known as a source for capable workers among businesses near our Hudson, Wisconsin facility.

ProAct clients also participate in numerous volunteer activities, helping to acclimate them to community environments while providing assistance to worthy organizations, such as the Humane Society of Goodhue County.

It was also rewarding to see the favorable assessments of our clients in our annual survey, with very substantial majorities reporting that ProAct is



surpassing or meeting their needs and expectations well. Few barriers were identified and they are being dealt with expeditiously.

Though there were some delays in the expansion of our environmental initiative, involving the recycling of beverage containers collected at service stations and convenience stores, we are now ready to go ahead. That helps the community and provides work experiences for ProAct clients.

With the onset of warmer temperatures, we are looking forward to the cookouts that we hold for our participants at ProAct locations. I would also ask you to consider putting the ProAct Golf Classic on your calendar. ProAct's only fundraiser of the year, the 2013 Classic will be held Monday, August 19, at the Hastings Country Club.

I wish to thank our employees and board members for their many contributions to our work, and to all of our clients and supporters who help make this possible. You are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Steve Ditschler
Steve Ditschler

RED WING INTERNS GAIN PERSPECTIVE

Two interns are bringing needed help in Red Wing, applying what they've learned in the classroom and growing quickly in their knowledge of the disabilities industry.

Lisa Anderson and Tammy Gustafson will both soon graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, with degrees in human development and family studies, and vocational rehab, respectively.

"They are getting to see all the facets of the job and participate in it," said Case Manager Gloria Bechel, who mentors Anderson. Both interns are eager to see the depth of the jobs and are fast learners, she explained.

Gustafson takes what she's learning from her 160-hour internship practicum back to the classroom to contribute and learn from other students. She also works in a Red Wing group home, and knows a number of ProAct consumers. Human services is her



Interns Tammy Gustafson, left, and Lisa Anderson are gaining valuable experience at ProAct in Red Wing, and graduate from UW-Stout this spring.

second career as she managed a retail store in Red Wing for a number of years.

Anderson was filling in for a case manager who was on leave, covering a caseload of 37 clients. She said it's been a good challenge to learn how to approach and communicate with each individual differently.

Gustafson said staff members have been very willing to answer questions and teach her.



INTAKE LEADER THRIVES ON BEING A RESOURCE, TELLING PROACT'S STORY

Sue Lowe receives the phone calls, hears the desperation in a mother's voice and patiently guides people to the right resources for their son or daughter.

One word might describe her: genuine. While her task is to bring people in and match them to the best ProAct services, there are no pressure sales tactics, only concern for



Sue Lowe said she loves being a resource for people, even if they don't choose ProAct.

the people and an enthusiasm for ProAct that flows as naturally as a spring stream.

"When they do come in, it's hard to show them how wonderful I feel ProAct is in my heart. It's hard to get it all out,

to point it all out," said Lowe. "Oftentimes, I tell them it's my favorite place I have ever worked."

Her most loved task is helping people who don't have a clue where to start. It might be the parents of a student graduating from a transition program, or a family that's moved to the area from out of state. She compares it to sending a son or daughter off

to college. Parents always have their child's well-being in mind.

The jargon and bureaucracy can be intimidating. She made a glossary of industry terms and ProAct resources. And, her door is always open, as she tells inquirers: "You know what, even if you don't choose ProAct— I love to answer questions, even if your son or daughter chooses to go somewhere else."

Sometimes, people are getting the runaround as they call elsewhere to get answers. Lowe might give them a specific name and number to jumpstart the process. Then, if they're still running in circles, she tells them to call her

back and they'll go from there.

When people would come for a tour, she used to start in the front hall, but now she brings them back to her office. There's

less commotion and the setting allows for 10 or 15 minutes to talk about programs. People can ask questions and its quiet.

When the tour begins, many people discover ProAct's family-like atmosphere, the warmth of the consumers and staff and

how they make people feel, Lowe explains. "ProAct shines because of our great services and dedicated staff," she said.



Lowe, right, shares information and answers questions from Hennepin County social worker Myrna Tautant, left, and Christian Nielsen.

Get to know us

Admission Information

Eagan, Hudson-
Sue Lowe 651-289-3151
Red Wing, Zumbrota-
Pamela Veith 651-327-5613

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
651-327-5622

Production Services

Eagan- Dave Cavalier
651-289-3158
Greg Pechman 651-289-3157
Red Wing- Jim Bohmbach
651-327-5615
Paul Mummert 651-327-5620

Donation Opportunities

Sheena Henry 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

Humane Society, from page 1
drive some distance if Goodhue has a particular breed they're looking for.

The shelter has a contract with Red Wing and some surrounding communities to take in all stray animals, said Ostendorf. Derry said it accepts lizards but will not take snakes.



ProAct consumers have visited the facility in the past, and many people volunteer in the summer.

"We love working here," said a cheery Derry. "There are ups and downs. We've seen really sad cases. These guys are wonderful, you can tell they really care, and they love their jobs too."

BUSY PRODUCTION SEASON BEGINS EARLY

The ProAct work floors in Eagan are buzzing with activity, thanks to an inflow of jobs from existing and new customers.

One such project involves plastic box assembly and quality control performed for Packnet Ltd. The products have multiple dividers inserted in a pattern. These are checked to make sure they're seated properly in grooves.

A second assembly job covers tissue dispensers that resemble high end coffee cups. Designed to be placed in vehicle cup holders, they are customized with company logos, explains Sales Manager Greg Pechman.

Additionally, Rapala, a premium producer of fishing lures, has sent product packaging work to be handled in house by the production department. It also hosts a regular work crew entourage at its Eagan warehouse.



Above, Jason Cooke assembles and performs quality checks on boxes for Packnet. At left, promotional car cup holder tissue dispensers with company logos and coffee cup lids have become a popular fast turnaround item.

The lure maker acquired a number of companies and was relabeling lure boxes and assembling kits for special sales, explained Pechman. These include ProAct assembly of 144-piece master cartons to ship to retail stores. "It's big volume and it has to be done right."

ProAct brand spreads with new bottle recycling effort identifier on collection bins



Coming to a convenience store near you: new stickers tie ProAct to important bottle recycling efforts in the south metro area. The nonprofit provides a valuable service by collecting and processing plastic and glass bottles from about 40 locations for recycling, reducing litter on the roadways.



PROACT

PROACT BRIEFS:

Garden signs hit market with combined effort



Eagan consumers have thrived on the variety of tasks required to make painted garden signs, which are now for sale. From left in front are Rachel Honl, Chrissy Edwards, Trisha Zechmeister, and Delfina Selgado. Mike Poski and James Ostrander are in back.

More than 50 consumers in Eagan have helped create garden stakes and plant markers in the latest colorful effort to design products that people want to buy.

Freehand and stenciled drawings with welcome messages, patriotic sayings and vegetable identifiers are attention grabbers. These are emblazoned on custom cut and sanded wood, some of it with decorative knobs.

Large signs sell for \$10 and small signs are \$2, or three for \$5.

Organizer and Production Manager Jennifer Cavalier found many of the materials for free or at discount and is seeking a grant to further expand the project. She welcomes donations of door knobs and drawer pulls.

Practice for better drama



Case Manager and actress Stephanie Osman expects as much from her cast as she does from herself, as they gather before play practice and people tell the group what they're going to do differently this time.

The pep talk for players in "The Unexpected Curse: An Enchanting Story of Powers Lost and Gained," calls on each person to improve. They promise to stay more focused, add more volume, generate more energy, lots of practice, to stay in character, and give better eye contact.

Joey Langbeck, who plays the "Big Bad Wolf," starts out as evil but ends up being good in the fairy tale musical drama. He said he's learned a lot about technique.

Rachelle McKinley, who plays "Little Red Riding Hood," said the point of the play is that people don't need powers, they just need friends. "You can tell that people are happy when they see it."

The play, directed by Osman and Case Manager Matt Briggs, opens at 1 p.m. at Easter Lutheran Church in Eagan on April 27.

Child's 'Hearts for June'



Inspired by a KARE 11 report about June Rudd, a 3-year-old girl with a rare disease, a team of ProAct

clients decorated almost 1,000 4-inch heart cards for her room at Children's Hospital.



With rare disease called Aicardi Syndrome, June wasn't expected to live a full year, the station reported. During her recent five week hospital stay, her parents put out a call for encouragement, asking for 20,000 hearts for June by June. Production Manager Jennifer Cavalier motivated consumers to contribute, and they made 952 heart cards.

Donations, award, support programs, employment

Two area United Ways dedicated grant dollars, as did a horseback riding club and Dakota Electric, which named ProAct for an award.



Red Wing Case Manager Heidi Befort, left, accepts a donation from Bear Valley Riders' Judy Diercks, whose daughter, Meghan, center, works at ProAct.

The United Way of Hastings contributed \$3,000 toward programs and the United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha and Pierce Counties pledged \$5,000 for supported employment services.

Education, health and wellness are the primary areas of support for the United Way of Hastings, which chooses grant recipients based on its mission, explains Tara Donahue Weiss, the executive director.

In Goodhue and Wabasha County, the Mazeppa-based Bear Valley Riders Club gave \$1,500 for outdoor sports and activity equipment in Red Wing.

The club has always had a community support focus. "It's been something we've strived to do over the years," said Club Secretary Mark Diercks.

A much larger group, Dakota Electric Association, named ProAct for a Touchstone Energy Award, and a \$500 grant. The honor recognizes organizations for outstanding contributions to the local community.

After much preparation, Eagan consumer now citizen



Delfina Selgado

Delfina Selgado was sworn in as a new U.S. citizen recently in Minneapolis after completing an extensive study and test regimen.

A native of Mexico and longtime ProAct consumer in Eagan, she lived in the United States with a green card. Selgado received help in reading the rules, studying and getting to the test site. "I made it and I'm happy."

Promotional companies welcome ProAct to group



Now a Business Service member with the Upper Midwest Association of Promotional Professionals (UMAPP), ProAct is interacting with more product suppliers and distributors.

UMAPP is for promotional product distributors and suppliers, and ProAct does business with both groups, said Sales Manager Greg Pechman. As a qualification for membership, the nonprofit sought out and received 10 referrals from other organizations. "What I found was that among the ProAct customers we have both suppliers and distributors," Pechman said.

VOLUNTEER GAINS EXPERIENCE

Eagan consumer Marion Loan enjoys being around children, so she looks forward to her Monday morning volunteer work at Parkview Elementary School in Lakeville.

For six months, Loan has dusted and swept at the south suburban school, which serves nearly 800 students. The self-described perfectionist said she'd rather be doing than sitting. Loan lives nearby and walks to the school.

She interviewed for the volunteer post after a thorough area search with ProAct Case Manager Charlotte Eastin. Volunteer positions enhance the experience of consumers and can open up paid job opportunities, she explains.

School staff are grateful to have her.

"I really appreciate the volunteers here," said Parkview Elementary media clerk Kathy Halverson in the library.

"They come in and help a lot."

Prior to joining ProAct,



Marion Loan, left, found a practical volunteer opportunity close to home at Parkview Elementary School in Lakeville, where her work is appreciated by library media clerk Kathy Halverson and other staff members.

Loan cared for her aging mother for 21 years until she passed away in 2007. "Marion is one of the nicest people I know," said Eastin.

She was familiar with the school after watching her relatives act in plays there when they were students. Loan is from Cleveland, Ohio and moved with her mother to Minnesota in 2002 to follow her sister's family.

"She's is always so willing," said Eastin, "and will say, 'Yeah, let's go, let's do it.'"

Watch for more volunteers profiled in the next issue of People Achieving.



ProAct's 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.

ROOKIE MEN: INCREASING ROLES

Most people in the human service field are women, but that hasn't fazed two young case managers at ProAct in Red Wing, who take their jobs in stride and excel at learning from their more seasoned counterparts.

Matt Grimley, 25, and John Kleingam, 23, are a calm and quiet influence, completing important tasks and taking their share of jokes from the ProAct veterans working with them, explains Sally Ogren, director of programs and services.

When Kleingam meets others in the field, they're sometimes surprised. "You show up at a meeting and they're like, 'Wow, you're a guy and you're young,'" he said. All the social workers he interacts with for his Wisconsin consumers are female.

The Minneapolis native graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in sociology.

While paperwork and coordination are a big part of his routine, Kleingam said he particularly enjoys helping consumers learn new jobs, even those who hadn't been employed in the past. It's fun to relay stories about their success to their guardians, he explains. "The clients are usually really proud about it."

Grimley, who is from Lake City, works primarily with consumers who have mental illness, through a state program called ARMHS (Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services). He

trained under his predecessor as a part-time employee. Grimley graduated from Winona State University with a degree in therapeutic recreation and worked at a Rochester group home.



Case Managers John Kleingam, left and Matt Grimley, two exceptions in a female dominated field. Leaders say they have adapted well and are learning a great deal.

He coordinates group classes that run for four to six weeks, and helps consumers get out in the community and use the available resources. Basic living and social skills are an emphasis.

The soft spoken men seem to be good listeners when veteran staff members give their input. Some have a nearly 30-year history with consumers. "They know the clients really well," said Kleingam. In sharing stories from ProAct's history books, some

veterans start doing the mental math based on the men's ages. "They ask us how old we were—minus-2 or 5-years-old at the time," said Grimley.

Frank discussions are not uncommon. "They'll let you know exactly what's on their mind," he said, joking.



FINANCIAL STABILITY, A PROACT HALLMARK

His field is banking, but ProAct board member Jim Louwagie has also developed a track record of service to the ProAct organization.

Louwagie, business banking team lead at Anchor Bank in Burnsville, said his history with ProAct dating back at least 15 years gives him a leg up on understanding the nonprofit's current situation. "ProAct has always been a well run, well managed program," he said. The challenge today comes more from outside influences, such as changing state budgets, he explained.

The board member said possible funding reductions will challenge the entire disability service industry to be smarter, thinking outside the box to operate more efficiently, while maintaining client service.

ProAct watches its overhead carefully and has built a reserve account of sorts to weather future storms. Louwagie's perspective as a financial person is rounded out by members in business, industry people and a parent of an adult with disabilities.

"They bring a perspective that

ProAct is more than just about business," said Louwagie. "We are first and foremost responsible to our clients and stakeholders, so not every decision can be strictly business; it has to meld with our mission."



Bank executive and board member Jim Louwagie brings a solid financial perspective to the board.

The board member has much to say about the nonprofit's strong group of senior leaders. Overhead costs are low, and having very little debt has been a key factor for the organization, according to Louwagie. When donors explore the percentage of donations that go toward the nonprofit's mission, he said ProAct is unequaled.

ProAct's board doesn't have to, and doesn't want to micromanage, Louwagie said. It generally stays out of the day to day operations of the organization and covers the "big picture," ideas, philosophies and the general direction. "We're watching things and making sure we're headed in the right direction," he said.

As a banking industry leader, Louwagie serves on a handful of boards, and has found that ProAct's leadership stands out in its ability to handle most issues and keep the board informed. "It's a real pleasure to be on ProAct's board and it's an honor to be associated with a strong well run organization," Louwagie said.

ENGAGED, EXERCISING AND RECOGNIZING

Great turnout for exercise in Red Wing

Human service technician Kathy Tesch, in red, leads Red Wing consumers in an adaptive form of "drums alive," to raise heart rates. Rotating groups of individuals perform aerobics, square dancing and even "Sweating to the Oldies." People also utilize treadmills, ellipticals and bike machines given by the ULLR Foundation, the philanthropic division of the ULLR Ski, Bike & Social Club based in Bloomington.



Minnesota Twins caravan offers opportunity to meet celebrities

Meghan Diercks, with a signed Twins bat and ball and Tom Murray met announcer and Hall of Fame member Bert Blyleven at the St. James Hotel. The famed Twins' pitcher helped lead the team to a World Series victory in 1987.



Warm chili, good fun kick off spring

A spring chili cookoff judged by consumers brought warmth to the ProAct West building in Eagan. Some stepped up to the microphone to give speeches.



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Shopper Karin Westby looks through book selections at the CHAP Store in Burnsville.

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.

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



"I Love My Job"

What happens to your business when people enjoy their work?

From recycling to fine jewelry packaging, ProAct has found individuals who love to work.



651-289-3170 in Eagan

651-347-5622 in Red Wing

715-410-4216 in Hudson

YOUR MATERIALS CAN HELP The Eagan facility can use your old door knobs, drawer pulls, toilet paper rolls, crayons and candles. Drop them off at the front desk with Attn: Jennifer Cavalier.

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