



# People Achieving

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## PROACT eRECYCLING SERVICES: SOUND PRACTICES, DESTROYS DATA

Electronic devices are most everywhere and they're only increasing in number. But what happens when it's time to dispose of them?

ProAct joins a national recycling partner to bring the answer, ProAct eRecycling Services, a new business unit with e-waste collection and processing in Red Wing. Plans are to add metro area collections in the coming months.

"We will take almost anything with a cord," said project leader Tim Hovey at ProAct in Red Wing. Computers, appliances, televisions, CRT monitors, even

toasters are collected here, some items for a fee. The work is performed locally by people with disabilities in an environmentally responsible manner that's verified by



Cody Baniitt talks at length about the things he's learned about product disassembly at ProAct eRecycling Services in Red Wing.

third parties.

Most products are disassembled at ProAct's Red Wing facility to recover parts and materials to be sold on commodity markets. The computers, in particular, add another



element, with the need for data security.

### Data destruction is key

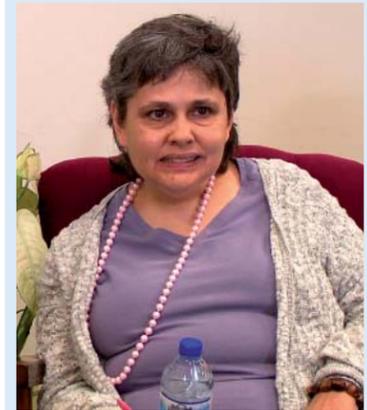
Standard measures assure that hard drives are under lock and key until they're destroyed with a portable shredding machine. Written proof of destruction is offered, and workers undergo background checks as an added precaution.

Supervisor Chris Hartley, who trains ProAct consumers on product tear downs, said the new effort has brought a positive feeling throughout ProAct's facility. There's a professionalism with the workers and an excitement that's spreading. "Everyone wants to get involved," said Production Manager Jim Bohmbach.

### National network

ProAct is a network member of See ProAct eRecycling Services, page 2

## SHE'S IN-CENTER, ACTIVE, ENGAGED



Carmen Strom and her family have found a strong match with ProAct that's lasted a quarter-century.

Consumer Carmen Strom takes pride in receiving a paycheck.

Though the 25-year ProAct participant in Eagan can't always say it clearly, her parents understand that this benefit alone has had a large impact on her life.

Though it's difficult for her to put it into words, Carmen appreciates the opportunities at ProAct, explains her father, Bill. "That's a pretty big thing for her."

Bill and his wife, Sara, sat down at ProAct's headquarters to talk about their quarter-century connection with ProAct. They said their daughter, who is now 48, has a functional age of about six. She assembles products on the work floor here, takes life skills classes, volunteers and goes on community outings.

Grateful is the word this couple uses when asked about their feelings toward ProAct.

"We really feel that ProAct is a wonderful program for her and hope that it will continue to be available to her," said Sara.

She's active in the Day Training and Habilitation program, where Beth Emerson is her designated coordinator.

### Helping her maintain

In the bigger picture, ProAct has helped Carmen to maintain her current level of skills, Emerson explains. "She's not sitting home all day." Nail and beauty classes, mall walking and park visits supplement the work schedule.

The coordinator sees an obvious connection between the Strom's adult daughter and her parents. "It's the level of support that Carmen receives here," said Emerson. "Carmen's happy so they're happy. Everyone is so caring and supporting of Carmen."

See Care and support, page 2

## New compactor saves space



Space and time are saved with ProAct's new plastic baler at the Eagan West building. David Rann stuffs sorted plastic bags for recycling to form 1,200 to 1,400 pound bales.

## ProAct Golf Classic - August 17

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## SILVER EAGLE COIN CREW GOES BIG ON JOB EXTENSION, COMPLETES TASK

It was a six week job that turned into six months, thanks to strong sales at GovMint.com, and work crews from ProAct in Eagan.

ProAct individuals packaged Silver Eagle dollar coins in the south metro area, with corresponding cards. These ship to coin collectors who respond to various promotions.

"They're like the ones that you see in the infomercials," said ProAct consumer Jennifer Schwake. "They filmed an infomercial here two weeks ago."



Team members packaged many boxes of Silver Dollars for coin collectors as part of an ongoing promotion.

Schwake admitted that she wants to package as many items as possible, as the results translate into wages paid on a piecework basis.

Crews ranging from three to 13 people prep the products before they're shipped by GovMint staff members.

"People tend to like it," said Site Supervisor Sheryl Civitillo. "They love to do the coins."

Cards are inserted into slots in plastic folders called flips, which are folded and See Silver Eagles ship out, see page 3

## PRODUCT SALES, NEW JOB, THEN APARTMENT HOME

Shift leader Aaron Weber at the Salvation Army Family Store can tell that Ron Kaufman loves the stocking and receiving job.

Weber said all they ask from employees is to do better than they did the day before. For Kaufman, earning the chance to work at a large thrift store like this one in Hastings has been his goal for a long time.

Summer is the peak season in the second hand store market, and Weber offers Kaufman pointers to help make the job easier. Smiling, Kaufman said Weber keeps him in line.

"The number one thing first is to get



Ron Kaufman records donations made at the Salvation Army store.

this stuff out so people like to buy it and we make our quota for the night," Kaufman said, pulling used items from shopping carts for display on shelves and walls. Before coming on the "floor," items are staged in the backroom, not far from a side door where Kaufman receives and tracks donation drop-offs.

"Working there has improved his confidence, his social skills and interaction. He's more confident in a work setting," said job developer Sam Kapala with ProAct in Red Wing. He was on a mission one day to scope out work for Kaufman and happened to connect with a Salvation Army store manager who had an



Kaufman, right, and his supervisor, Aaron Weber. They sort second hand products for sale.

immediate opening. Kapala helped with the interview, did one day of job coaching and now makes follow up visits.

Books, coffee cups, baseballs, tools, plates, nick nacks are sold alongside microwaves, radios and televisions.

See Salvation Army Hastings, page 3

## From the President...

The year 2015 is fast becoming eventful at ProAct with the introduction of several new activities and initiatives, together with progress in our continuing programs. All serve to keep people excited, active and motivated.

We just launched ProAct eRecycling Services in Red Wing, the first activity as part of the CyclePoint network of recycling organizations handling electronic devices. CyclePoint partners with organizations such as ProAct around the country to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to perform needed work for companies and the general public. I am pleased that we are able to ally with the City of Red Wing's Public Works Department at our first ProAct eRecycling location, benefiting us both. We plan to expand this environmentally sound and socially rewarding program to the greater Twin Cities area this fall, with services offered through ProAct's Eagan location.



I am pleased to report that the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, or CARF, has completed its periodic assessment and given ProAct a three-year accreditation, the maximum possible period. The survey team, composed of established professionals in the field, visited all ProAct locations and interacted with clients, staff, parents, and community leaders and organizations. ProAct was praised for its good standing with clients and parents, its staff, and its communications, and received recommendations concerning some other practices that had proven useful for other organizations.

ProAct's 2014-2015 program year ended June 30 with favorable results reported on all fronts. Program services received high ratings from clients and others, including community partners, aside from the CARF report, and ProAct remains in a sound financial position.

Another new adventure comes Monday, August 17, when the ProAct Golf Classic is held at Southview Country Club in West St. Paul for the first time. I'm sure that all will enjoy play at this fine course and the camaraderie and cuisine will be exceptional indeed. This is ProAct's only fundraising event of the year, so please plan to attend if at all possible.

Looking ahead, the fall brings our annual client banquets, which are always highlights of the year, and other programs and festivities going forward.

I appreciate the support we receive from our clients, family members, funders and community members, all of whom help us pursue our important mission.

Her background fits, from page 4

Kolo has many connections in River Falls and is growing her network in Hudson. Her mother, who recently passed away, had a craft sale in the area for 30 years which helped some area companies get started. Kolo now plans to approach those same companies to see if they can give ProAct consumers a place to start.

### Face to face to find work

People need a face to connect with, she said, so visits to business meetings are important. This makes the follow up calls and emails more effective later.

Visits to people with disabilities who currently have jobs can also be inspiring. Kolo takes note of their work pride and satisfaction in receiving paychecks. "That's how you stay motivated," she said.

## OVERCOMING FEARS OVER 25 YEARS, HE'S ON THE JOB AGAIN

"All it takes is someone who gets it," said program coordinator Margaret Christensen, speaking of a job match in River Falls.

Managers see someone who can contribute and a potential employee who wants to work. These are the ingredients in this recipe at Walgreens, where Doug Woodman is a part-time stocker.

After being on disability support and out of work for 25 years, Doug Woodman is overcoming an anxiety that comes on when he's around other people in the workplace. "I was afraid I would go in and more or less freeze up. I just didn't work," he said.

### Overcoming difficulties

Woodman speaks from an artificial voicebox that's pressed to his throat, a remnant of his past battle with throat cancer that began in 2010.



He credits God for a major change in his life. "He's the

one who gives me the strength to do it, to work on my fear," Woodman said.

Walgreens agreed to a two to three week work trial period for Woodman, who was coached primarily by ProAct Designated Coordinator LeeAnn Mergens.

He's been on his own ever since, scanning the shelves to place products, pulling expired items and getting the store ready for the night rush. "I enjoy being here. It's close to home and easy on gas." It's a good environment where people are nice, he explained. He would like to get more work hours and learned that things may open up for more in the fall.



Doug Woodman stocks the shelves at the River Falls Walgreens to prep for the evening rush.

Woodman said his wife was still adjusting to his work schedule as it's a change after being home for so many years. "I just enjoy it. It gets me out of the house and gives me something to do."

Christensen said Woodman is very good at deciphering the numbers

and knowing where products go. "And he enjoys doing that. It's like a scavenger hunt, trying to figure out which vitamins go where."

"I thank ProAct for getting me the job," he said. He's also enjoying a second chance at life after a heart attack. Woodman was then told by doctors that most people in his condition would not survive.



ProAct eRecycling Services, from page 1

CyclePoint from SourceAmerica, a \$155 million nonprofit network based in Virginia. The parent group claims a network of 1,000 nonprofits, which employ more than 125,000 people with significant disabilities.

### The right place

CyclePoint helps ProAct with the systems, certifications, and commodity sales of reclaimed materials. ProAct is a "Tier 2" provider, which means it can collect and disassemble products, but does not perform the final recycling function. That's left up to providers in Tier 3.

Fuel for the e-recycling fire flows in part from Minnesota's mandatory recycling rules that began in 2006. Electronics



containing cathode-ray tubes, such as old televisions and CRT monitors, must be recycled by law, and ProAct receives them for a fee. Fees are also collected for microwaves and appliances, but most products are accepted with out charge. Items containing refrigerants, such as air conditioners, dehumidifiers and refrigerators, are not accepted.

### Help not far away

The new startup operation got a needed boost from the Red Wing Solid Waste Campus, which began to funnel electronic materials to ProAct's new operation. Larger area employers are also strong prospects, as are additional sources through CyclePoint.

ProAct leaders have hopes that the

newfound work will provide added stability during Red Wing's leaner winter months.

The nonprofit is a registered recycler with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and is working toward certification under R2/RIOS operating standards by early in 2016. It's also an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, which works with millions of volunteers to "transform public spaces into beautiful places."

The overall focus is on green jobs for people with and without disabilities and environmental responsibility.

Collection hours and additional details are posted online at [proactinc.org](http://proactinc.org).



## Connect with us

### Admission Information

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

### Need Employees?

Eagan- Debra Ulrich (groups)  
651-289-3183  
Anna Shields (individuals)  
651-289-3177

Hudson- Traci Kolo, 715-245-6877  
Red Wing- Kyle Adams, 651-327-5622  
Sam Kapala, 651-327-5637

### Production Services

Eagan- Dave Cavalier 651-289-3158  
Greg Pechman 651-289-3157  
Red Wing- Jim Bohmbach  
651-327-5615  
Kyle Adams 651-327-5622

### Donation Opportunities

Sheena Henry 651-289-3149

Care and support, from page 1

"It's a good place for her to be, at ProAct. She values it a great deal."

The Stroms said as they have aged, they remain concerned about their daughter's future and her guardianship may eventually pass to her brother. They don't guide her programming, but said they are kept well-informed by Emerson about different options.

"I can't say enough about the staff people who work here ... to devote themselves to a program like this ... I'm very grateful," said Sara, wiping her tears.



Carmen's parents, Bill and Sara, said the program completes "another side of her life" and makes them feel really good.

"We are very grateful, yes," said Bill.

Carmen lives in a group home in West St. Paul while her parents reside in Hastings.

## ProAct Playhouse a hit, looks toward fall production



A crowd of almost 250 attended the May performance of the ProAct Playhouse, and plans are underway for a new fall production in late October or November, explains Designated Coordinator and Director Matt Briggs. Participants are working on a montage, vignettes and heroes for their own script. Briggs added two additional theater classes to get more people involved.



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## PROACT BRIEFS:

### New work saves company from hiring second shift

It's the busy season at Stencil Cutting Supply in Red Wing, a component supplier to the elevator industry that was facing a need to add temporary workers or a second shift to meet product assembly deadlines. The company called ProAct instead.



"It's not an every day job," said ProAct's Kyle Adams in sales. The nonprofit was able to assemble 10 to 15 people on an as-needed basis to put together elevator button kits.

Production assistant Lisa Larsin with SCS said the kits go with metal buttons and include a washer and spacer. ProAct often has a week to complete jobs, but sometimes deadlines are shorter.

Larsin said SCS has grown quite significantly after one of its competitors closed down. It also hired one ProAct consumer to do work at the SCS facility.

### Hudson gets dancing, plants new gardens



A formal dance during the week and some impressive new gardens round out new experiences for consumers at ProAct's Life Opportunities program in Hudson.

Planning and prep for the first formal dance was performed by consumers and featured an "Enchanted Forest" theme. "It was so empowering for them to see a small idea turn into an actual event," said Program Coordinator Margaret Christensen, who said it was a major success.

Additional help came from Sol Luna Salon, Fantastic Sam's in Hudson and Youth Action Hudson for service and clothing donations, as well as proceeds from bird seed wreath sales.



### Peer review group grants three-year accreditation



After a several day review, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities has given a three year accreditation to ProAct, Inc.

CARF surveyors visited all ProAct facilities in the middle of April, and noted several strengths of the organization. The group also made suggestions, sharing ideas that might enhance the way ProAct currently meets CARF standards or practices or models that might work well for the nonprofit.



Among the peer reviewers' findings, ProAct consumers were said to appear happy and engaged in their work and training. Employers are satisfied with supports from ProAct and stay connected and management was found to be receptive to customers with a strength in communication. CARF surveyors also found that ProAct's staff displayed a passion, commitment and enthusiasm in their work.

### She designed button art for Eagan Funfest



For two years, Eagan consumer Kathy Fields has volunteered for Eagan Funfest. This year, she was invited to join the planning committee and design the button for the celebration. Eagan's major two-day event celebrates the Fourth of July with a parade, carnival rides, vendor booths and fireworks.



## PLANT HELPERS GAIN VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

Planting season and ProAct came together in Hastings at Sterling, a small town drug store where volunteers helped maintain plants for an eager gardening public.



Eagan Designated Coordinator Tara Korf, left, worked with Donovan Sledge, Kathy Thames, Scott Davis and Shannon Riswald to care for plants at the Sterling drugstore in Hastings.

Consumer Kathy Thames said she "takes the dead parts off," and waters plants while Donovan Sledge retrieves items from higher shelves. The two are part of a group of volunteers who benefit from work experience each week in summer's heat. A portable greenhouse in the lot is where it all happens.



Designated Coordinator Tara Korf guides the helpful



visitors. She herself is a Sterling employee, as is another ProAct staff member in Eagan.

Sledge said it's kind of sad when they're done. "It helps me out in the real world if I get a job," he said. "Or, if I plant one day." The volunteer activity has prompted thoughts about work.

Korf said the crew's grooming keeps plants healthy and helps prevent mold. Some consumers have separated plans to make them easier to pick up, and have learned about the different types, she explains.

Many of the benefits are purely visual, said Korf. The flowers' beauty is a kind of bonus.

While working with product, the ProAct participants also learn customer service skills, such as being polite, answering questions and directing people to the people who can help.

Sterling is also a popular spot for shoppers, she said.

Spring is good to plants this year, which developed well, Korf said.

## PLEASANTRIES FOR OLIVE GARDEN GUESTS

Jason Maus at the Olive Garden delights in people interactions, but he especially likes the restaurant food that's cooking in the kitchen behind him.

"The food here is fantastic, very phenomenal," he said. "There's a wide variety ... and the one I've been eating the most happens to be the chicken gnocchi soup."

This greeter at the Burnsville establishment is a "good guy who puts a smile on everybody's face," said General Manager Gjon Prendi.

Restaurants and entertainment often go hand in hand, and Maus from ProAct adds a certain level of excitement and hospitality. Prendi said he does a wonderful job.

The pathway to this successful part-time gig offers a reminder to be watchful for opportunities as they pop up. Maus found the position after his father talked to the manager while they dined in the restaurant.

Donning a one-year of service Olive Garden pin, Maus rolls silverware in napkins and greets people at the front door. He tells coworkers that he's "fresh," meaning he's ready to go

to work, and they notice. "A part of that is being clean, being very well energetic and upbeat," he said.

For lunch guests, the word enjoy flows liberally, as do the words come again. "Anything to make them happy, to get them smiling," he said. a

Though his restaurant schedule expanded from two to three days, Maus continues to work at ProAct and volunteers, as well.

His designated coordinator, Matt Briggs, makes regular visits to chart Maus's progress. Briggs is also a ProAct Playhouse drama instructor, and Maus is one of his students.

The young man's main goal, said Briggs, is to work independently and support himself. His next step, living independently, may not take long to achieve.



Jason Maus found a great fit for his work environment at Olive Garden in Burnsville, where the general manager, below right, and coworkers take pleasure in his demeanor.



Salvation Army Hastings, from page 1

Though the store is closed on Sundays Kaufman is there to receive product donations and prepare for another week of retail activity.

The products must be selling well, as Kaufman alone stocked 14 carts of merchandise on one Wednesday, pressing through to completion, despite having a migraine headache. "I got it done, finished ... and got a fist bump."

Another adventure involved a mattress that was dropped off by someone. Kaufman's manager asked him to put it in a dumpster as the store could be fined \$500 if a used mattress is found inside. "We don't sell mattresses and we can't bring them in here."

Electronics are tested and sold if they work, and items are offered "as is," said the stock worker. A color tag system helps employees determine a product's days on the sales floor.



Kaufman sweeps, mops and dusts as time allows, a job he did for years at the American Legion in Red Wing.

Sometimes, he's called up front to help a customer load items in a vehicle. "We do get a nice response from people who say thank you," said Kaufman. "We usually get high fives (and they say) 'You did so good and got it in there.'" He greets people and tries to form a connection, and stays busy.

"I think I'm doing really good, and have been wanting this for years."

The independent job has Kaufman moving in more ways than one. He planned to move into his own apartment this summer, and was shopping for furniture to prepare. Can anyone guess where he might buy it?

"The job and the apartment go hand in hand," said ProAct job developer Sam Kapala. Kaufman's ultimate goal was to live independently. Work is within walking distance.

Silver Eagles ship out, from page 1 separated from sheets of 10, down to single items.

The shiny 2015 Silver Dollars are handled by the edges and oriented in packages for the best display.

Schwake has assembled 270 sheets, or 2,700 packets in one shift, on a record day. Consumer John Rybak joined the crew at the end of its stint here, bringing experience with greeting card packaging from another nonprofit provider.

While speed is rewarded, the jobs here are also good for consumers who need to go at a slower pace, Civitillo explains.

A promotion called Star Shop involves a smart phone application, explains GovMint.com Manager Todd Schultz. Coin collectors are the primary buyers for the business, which also has a catalog operation, he said.



Jennifer Schwake, left, inserts cards in plastic holders for coin collectors. At right, Michelle Connelly displays the finished product.



ProAct got its start with another division of the business, Stauer, which handles watches, jewelry and other products. It also employs a weekday cleaning crew at the same facility.

## EXPERIENCE, DRIVE FOR JOB DEVELOPER

River Falls-native Theresa (Traci) Kolo had great fun taking special ed students out to shadow others on jobs. She has a fascinating family background in disabilities and now enters a critical area of the adult disability world, employment service.

The new full-time job developer at ProAct in Hudson has spent much of her career as a special ed teacher's aide, and her family history in Wisconsin can be traced to the start of modern disability services on the west side of the Badger State, more than 50 years ago.

### Grandmother was leader

Kolo's grandmother helped start REACH, a program that's similar to ProAct, which operates in Eau Claire. The need arose when her uncle became challenged by

encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain, and needed special training. He died in the 1960s, but the family continued on in the field.

"This has kind of been my thing my whole life," said Kolo, who enjoyed hearing stories about the Special Olympics. Two of her sisters are special ed teachers.

As a substitute teacher at a special needs school, she taught life and job skills. When one school needed help with behavioral issues, Kolo was the one who was called.

She remembers her uncle, and that all he wanted to do was to be part of the community.

Many others are often willing to help, she said. Most everybody has been affected by someone with a disability or special needs. "They would like to see their niece, or whoever, to have a reason to be around."

Her background fits, see page 2



When the job developer posting first appeared, Traci Kolo knew it was for her. Her work with people with disabilities is significant. It's all in the family.



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## MISSION IS BOARD'S FOCUS, SAYS CPA

With the recent completion of ProAct's budget for the next fiscal year, Board Treasurer and CPA Chuck DeNet said careful management has allowed ProAct to look ahead with confidence.

"Financially, we're in great shape relative to a lot of people in the industry" said DeNet. The nonprofit is a good steward of its funds and is careful about where they're spent, he explains.

DeNet describes budgets as a management tool, and that's how ProAct's was designed. The challenge for nonprofits in the disability realm is found in the many "divergent" factors that impact the revenue side. Many are beyond ProAct's control, which makes it difficult to budget and plan, DeNet said.

Despite this, the CPA notes the changes the financial auditors need to make in an organization's financial statements. ProAct has had very few in the last several years, which speaks to the abilities of Controller Pat McGuire, DeNet explained.

The treasurer said CEO Steve

Ditschler and his staff have done an outstanding job of staying on top of things. This management helps get the focus back on the people in the programs. "It's much more fun to talk about what can we do to better serve the clients," said DeNet.

Financial stability has allowed for new ventures, such as the ProAct eRecycling Services program. The funding needed to get the new effort off the ground and make it viable is there. "And, it looks like it can really be a benefit to the clients," he said.



There's much to learn and the CPA has found the board of directors

to be intelligent, with each bringing a different perspective. "That's really what you want."

In the end, DeNet said, what really matters is the mission. That's been the common theme since the day he joined the group, and it has continued.

## FEEDING KIDS, RED WING VOLUNTEERS CONNECT

The value of helping others in the community cannot be underestimated, and ProAct has multiple involvements, including a weekly United Way summer lunch program for children in Red Wing.

Gathering at the Colvill Family Center on the city's east side, neighborhood children take in a noon meal, as well as samples of healthy food options.

"They're taste testing different foods," said Maureen Nelson, executive director of the United Way of Goodhue, Wabasha and Pierce Counties. Coloring pages and a quiz on smoothie ingredients are part of the fun. Foods are provided through a grant from Goodhue County and prepared at the Mayo



At top left, kids drop the bikes for a free lunch at the Colvill Family Center in Red Wing. It's served by United Way Volunteer Day workers Kayla Handy, left, Lora Gruber, Cassie Conrad and United Way Executive Director Maureen Nelson.



hospital in town.

Nelson said some parents are working during the day, and the students here usually have free and reduced cost lunches during the school year. "It's not part of their budget, so when summer comes, it really stretches their budget to provide food."

ProAct consumers Kayla Handy and Cassie Conrad passed out sack lunches with ham sandwiches while a retired teacher circulated around the room talking to the children. Conrad said the experience has been good for her.

"The more the adults are interacting with the kids, the better it is," said Nelson. Between 30 and 40 children show up for the Thursday lunches, served by an average of about eight volunteers, she explained.