



## USING CAMERA BRINGS NEW PERSPECTIVE, APPRECIATION

ProAct's photography class in Eagan starts with equipment, but soon evolves into something far greater—seeing the world differently.

Offered for the second year, Designated Coordinator and instructor Stephanie Podkopacz and seven students visited many Twin Cities sites over the summer. The class checked out several possible locations in advance, pulling up websites on a screen so the group could see what each would be like. Stillwater, Mall of America, Como Zoo, Minnehaha Falls and several area parks were explored.

With each field trip, students shared a digital camera but kept the photos they took on their own memory cards. Class members helped each other safely insert and remove the cards from the camera. During the final days of the class, they viewed each others' photos and kept 40 to 50 of their favorites.

Photography requires careful attention, and Podkopacz noticed the process had a calming effect on her students. She encouraged them to be creative with their



Class members visited an apple orchard, Corey Schmitt, Michael Becker, Kelsie Robotka, Emily Peterson, Shannon Stone and Mary Klein. Far right, Kathy Lea was part of another outing.

photography and to pay more attention to the beauty around them as they visited each setting. The most popular location was

Como Zoo, where their goal was to capture images of the animals. They also appreciated the dramatic waterfall at Minnehaha Park.

## BREAKING NEW GROUND WITH 'ADAPTED LEAN?'

Lean manufacturing principles have helped many companies become more productive and organized, but has Lean ever involved people with disabilities? Most likely not, until late in 2014 at ProAct.

People with disabilities have been involved with process diagramming, says Colleen Wieck, executive director of the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. But, she was unaware of people with disabilities ever participating in an "Adapted Lean" context.

The same goes for Lean expert and 16-year trainer Joe Drafall with Minnesota Lean Partners. And, Access Press, the state's disability newspaper, as well as the longtime communications director for the

Arc of Minnesota, were also unaware of any examples of Adapted Lean ... anywhere.

ProAct began training several consumers in Lean processes, after initial efforts to implement Lean began in the summer. In a "train the trainer" type format, workforce supervisors learn the process and then pass it on, explains Jennifer Cavalier, Day Training production manager and recycling coordinator in Eagan. Lean has shaved minutes from processes, explains Red Wing Production Manager Jim



Adapted Lean class member Julie Ryan, left, with Production Manager Bob Moore at an Eagan staff led training session.

Bohmbach. "It's the knowledge of how to get faster than 100 percent .. even 125 percent," he said.

In Eagan, Production Director Dave Cavalier said Lean helps people to look at things from a different point of view, assessing if a particular task adds value. At the heart of Lean are the 5S Pillars: Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize and Sustain. ProAct's involvement with Lean started late in 2013, with a grant from the state's Department of Employment and Economic Development.

## GREAT EMPLOYERS, AWARDS GRANTED



ProAct Business Development and Support Manager Catherine McCoy, left, congratulates Debra Roth with Dianne's Custom Candles.

The ceremony and recognition were significant, but they couldn't overshadow the important role and contributions of ProAct's 2014 Employers of the Year.

Staff from the Red Wing and Eagan locations made the selections, with the main qualification being the impact each has on the ProAct clients they employ.

Red Wing selected Paul's Industrial Garage (P.I.G.) of Diamond Bluff, Wis. and Airtex Design Group of Minneapolis. In Eagan, four employers were recognized: Dianne's Custom Candles of Burnsville; Eagan Hardware Hank; McDonald's and Noiseland Industries of Minneapolis.

"Our partnerships with employers are invaluable to the people with disabilities we serve, said ProAct President and CEO Steven Ditschler. "Besides wages, work provides a sense of wellbeing and satisfaction along with the opportunity to contribute something of value and be a part of."

P.I.G. employs seven individuals in materials recycling. The company hired a daily crew and supervisor in the spring of 2013 to help sort recyclable glass, plastic and aluminum collected from area homes.



Kyle Adams, in sales for ProAct in Red Wing, speaks about the winners at the location's recognition banquet.

Airtex utilizes ProAct for material die cutting, assembly and packaging. The products are bulk-shipped to the company's customers.

In Burnsville, Dianne's Custom Candles recently added a second ProAct crew for box assembly, packaging, glass preparation and fulfillment. Eagan Hardware Hank is a small hardware store that's had a long term relationship with ProAct, serving as a work experience site and hiring people.

In the service industry, the McDonald's on Silver Bell Road in Eagan employs three ProAct clients, and has appreciated ProAct's support. And, Noiseland Industries has called on the nonprofit's people to prepare and package hundreds of thousands of vinyl records.

## Inside: • What 245D means to me • Smooth transition for daughter • Let drivers know, cold prep

## WARM HOLIDAY WISHES FOR PROACT FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The approach of the holidays seemed to come early this year with the unanticipated snow setting off a wave of preparations even in advance of Thanksgiving. And though we are getting ready for holiday gatherings, it is also a good time to reflect on the year we have had.

For ProAct, we look back on a year of progress in meeting the needs of the people we serve, those with disabilities and other challenges. Through our range of programs and pathways to employment we assist them in developing their skills and preparing for lives built on their own needs and interests. This emphasis on person-centered planning will continue to grow as we move into the new year.

A major measure of success is the satisfaction of our consumers, and I am pleased that we receive high marks in the evaluations we receive.

I give special thanks to those who make it possible for our work to go forward, our employees, our community partners who provide opportunities for employment and work at ProAct, and our many generous friends. You are truly appreciated.

To all members of



The Bordas family decorated an evergreen they donated to ProAct in 2006 to honor longtime client Kevin Bordas, who had passed away.

the ProAct family, our participants, family members, community supporters and employees, I wish you all the warmest of holidays.

May you and your families enjoy the season and experience a happy New Year!

Steven Ditschler

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND CORD RECYCLING RETURNS

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President Andrew Volna

### Vinyl surge

Noiseland has reached 500,000 packaged records with ProAct, for 47 different artists including a Bruce Springsteen order for 100,000.

## From the President...

The early freeze and snowfall didn't dampen or slow ProAct's momentum as activity continued at a high pace. Participation in ProAct programs is at near record levels, while the organization continues to move forward on several fronts.

We are moving ahead in implementing some monitoring and reporting changes to comply with or exceed the new requirements of 245D, the new regulatory direction from the Minnesota Department of Human Services. This reinforces the emphasis placed on person-centered planning, which has always been stressed at ProAct.

The annual ProAct Recognition Banquets were a major success, with 565 people attending the event for Eagan participants in Oakdale and nearly 500 at the banquet for Red Wing, Zumbrota and Hudson at Treasure Island in Red Wing. It is always gratifying to celebrate the accomplishments of our clients and to recognize the companies and organizations

that support ProAct by hiring our people and providing work.

Back in August with warmer weather the ProAct Golf Classic attracted a good field of players to the Hastings Country Club for a great round of golf and a satisfying dinner. ProAct's only fundraising event produced record support, enabling us to devote additional resources to meeting some key needs.

As we near the holidays, I wish to thank our clients, their families, our community partners and funders for their assistance throughout the year. Without your support it would not be possible for us to achieve our mission and serve effectively.

With warm holiday wishes and my hopes that you enjoy a Happy New Year.



*Steve Vothell*

## THREE JOBS, ALL THE BEST HE'S EVER HAD

From a high pressure job with millions of dollars in play to helping people find and maintain jobs, Sam Kapala in Red Wing has taken a big turn in his career, but he wouldn't go back and change it.

"This is the best job I've ever had," said Kapala. "I just told somebody that the other day."

As a work measurement specialist, job developer and job coach, he's doing something far different than his old position at the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis, where he managed treasury accounts for the investments of the U.S. government.

The key difference? He says working with people is far more rewarding than working with numbers.

The Fed has lots of stress and deadlines. "But when we met deadlines, there's not a lot of gratification, not feeling that 'step back and admire' moment."

At ProAct, Kapala watches people who may start out as resistant to interaction and receiving help. They then gradually develop and warm up to the staff, and make progress academically, personally and professionally, he explains.

The catalyst for Kapala's dramatic career shift was a volunteer role he played for an after school program with Minneapolis public schools. For four years, he tutored general education and special-ed students to develop their reading and social skills.

That lead came through a football coaching position he held with the Northeast Minneapolis middle school team. Some of his tasks were volunteer and some were paid.

Then, he was online and looking for jobs when a position popped up through the state Department of Employment and Economic Development. It was with ProAct.

A resident of Cannon Falls, Kapala was familiar with some of ProAct's clients, but he knew very little about the organization. But his girlfriend, who is from Wanamingo, works in the human services field. She knew of the nonprofit, and they both knew a man in town who would walk into restaurants and say he was from ProAct.

"But I had no idea of the whole spectrum (of what ProAct offers)." He walked out of the ProAct interview last September intrigued. "Here was something

where you'd actually be doing something and seeing it come to fruition, seeing results from it."

Newly hired, he started job coaching, then added work measurements and now job development, or seeking out job opportunities for consumers.

The three positions sometimes feel like more, he said, but he's never enjoyed a job as much as this one.

Personally, Kapala said ProAct has expanded his perspective on how different people are, coming from various places and backgrounds. He had a high opinion of programs like ProAct's, but being a part of it has brought a deeper appreciation.

"It's helped me grow as a person ... to reach into myself more and be more flexible and creative."

The tasks can be physically tiring, but once Kapala starts interacting with people again, his battery is charged.

One of his best traits, says Director of Programs and Services Sally Ogren, is excellent report writing. Kapala said he takes that responsibility seriously because it's tied closely to the interactions he has with people. He tries to build rapport, to observe what's going on with people and to assess them to his full ability. "I don't take that part of it for granted."

The same goes for job placements. Kapala helps people to enhance their skills and develop stronger relationships with

employers who, it is hoped, will hire more people with disabilities based on positive experiences and support.

He said he doesn't view the stressful parts of work negatively, but as a challenge that broadens his experience and skill

set. There's variety and it's unpredictable, because human beings are involved, he explains.

Wherever his career leads, at this point Kapala doesn't want to lose the daily interaction with consumers. "It's not just business, not just a job, but these individuals are like family and friends."

Pam Veith, employment services manager, said Kapala is very patient and has a calm manner with participants he is working with. "He communicates well and is able to assess the skills and abilities of people quickly. He is flexible in doing a variety of things and has a positive attitude."



Sam Kapala came to ProAct after a substantial stint with the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis.



Kapala's duties take him outside to find jobs for ProAct consumers in the Red Wing area.

## What 245D Means to Me – by Carolyn Dobis

*Person Centered Planning, is the key element in 245D guidelines.*

*What do we change? We are asking more questions.*

*We listen carefully to how individuals describe their disability and their goals. We ask about the support they need. The more we listen, the more we learn.*

*Guidelines include discussing likes and dislikes, goals and interests. They require that we provide more choices,*



*expanded learning opportunities and a widening of each person's support circle to involve more people in the community.*

*One concern has been the increased frequency of meetings and resulting 245D paperwork. We will monitor these requirements to be sure they do not detract from day to day care and proper attention to the individuals we serve.*

[Carolyn Dobis is director of programs and services at ProAct in Eagan.]

## NEW PRODUCTS CREATED IN RED WING

Creativity thrives in Red Wing, and there is ample evidence at ProAct's location where a new assortment of products are displayed.

Among the offerings from ProAct called Creative Creations, are decorative blocks that are sanded, painted and assembled by consumers in the river town. The blocks celebrate the seasons, holidays and more.

Consumers and staff participated in "A Cozy Christmas" craft sale the first week in December. "I think it will be big for us," said Gloria Bechel, a designated coordinator II with ProAct.

Valentines Day and Easter themed versions are planned for the spring. Costs range from \$2 to \$15.

Creative Creations and other ProAct products were marketed at the 2014 Recognition Banquet in Red Wing, and produced more than \$600 in sales. The new products have also generated some conversations on Facebook.



*Creative Creations products take a good amount of preparation and finishing work to become the decorative creative blocks they are. Prices range from \$2 to \$15.*



## HITTING THE BOOKS FOR JOB TRAINING

When Steve Maki and his support team discussed the next step to getting a job, they looked for volunteer work that was close to home and was safe, friendly and enjoyable.

The answer was obvious. With Maki's love of books and many visits to Inver Glen Library, only six blocks from his house, it seemed like a perfect solution. The safe, friendly and quiet workplace was recently renovated to be inviting and cheerful. He agreed to volunteer, and months later, has fit right in. Maki signs in, checks where the last person ended and straightens and organizes all the books using the Dewey Decimal System.

ProAct Designated Coordinator Charlotte Eastin said this is what a successful community project feels like, a perfect balance of comfort, interest and challenge.



Maki helps out at the newly expanded Inver Glen Library in Inver Grove Heights.

## CHECK OUT FACEBOOK.COM/PROACTING

## STEADY MAILING WORK: INBOXDOLLARS

"A high quality partner," is how InboxDollars founder and CEO Daren Cotter describes his company's relationship with ProAct.

The business rewards consumers for online advertiser interactions with Visa cash cards, and checks in the mail, which is where ProAct crews enter the scene.

At the end of each month, thousands of checks are sent via first class mail, and each envelope needs a stamp. Previously, InboxDollars would shut down the company once a month and ask employees to stamp and stuff envelopes. That work now goes to ProAct clients. "It's also great for our company from a business perspective," Cotter said.

The business has an unusual history, having started in 2000 from Cotter's college dorm room. He called it a hobby type company for the first five or six years, as it wasn't focused on growth. In



2006 a chief operating officer was hired to grow the business.

Today, the Mendota Heights web-based company has 1.6 million active users and has interacted with more than 30 million people in its history. "Our twist is we generate revenue from our advertisers and we share some of that revenue back with you," said Cotter.

The advantage for many of his users is that they are rewarded for online activities that most consumers are already doing.



### ProAct Board of Directors:

Chuck DeNet, Paul Kramp, Mary Ellen Leary, Larry Lehman, Jim Louwagie, Teri McCloughan, Marty Stapleton, DeDe Wanzek and Jon Wilbrecht.

### SMOOTH TRANSITION FOR FAMILY, DAUGHTER

It was a big transition, from school to work, and for the Krause family and their 21-year-old daughter, Holly, it's been smooth.

Holly worked two days a week at ProAct while she attended Branch Out, a School District 197 transition program in northern Dakota County, then went full-time with ProAct in June of 2014.

"The people, the managers, are the most wonderful people, and actually really understand the clientele," said Patty Krause, Holly's mother. "Our case manager and some of the others we've met are very dynamic and very loving and lots of fun."

Holly has many friends at ProAct, and staff have helped to make it a good fit, her father, Tom, explained. Classes and activities bring a level of variety, covering four half days a week. The rest of her time is spent working.

Like many adults, there are days when people don't want to go to work, Patty explains. "But, once she's there, she absolutely loves it." Exercise, crafts,

grooming and gardening classes have also kept Holly busy.

And, ProAct's recognition banquet had a big family feel, said Patty, who enjoyed the awards for service, dance and dinner. The awards, in particular, generated a high level of excitement. "It was like going to the ball. The big ball ... wonderful."



Patty and Tom Krause took time to talk about how Holly had made the transition from her school setting to ProAct. Below, Holly demonstrates how to make craft items with a stenciling machine. She enjoys the wide variety of activities at ProAct each day.



### Annual celebration, recognition with family

Family members and friends were on hand to celebrate the work anniversaries of ProAct consumers at two Recognition Banquet events.



#### Red Wing/Zumbrota/Hudson Families and Friends



#### Eagan Families and Friends



### PROACT BRIEFS:

#### Donations keep coming from ULLR

Nancy Keyes, right at microphone, presented the latest donation to ProAct in Red Wing at the annual recognition banquet.

The ULLR Ski for Light Foundation has contributed a total of more than \$10,000 to the program, most of it for exercise and related equipment. Keyes said her group may be the only philanthropic ski club in the U.S.



#### Facebook ads seek positions for clients

New advertisements on a popular social media site are seeking employers who could use help from ProAct consumers.



"I am happy to be testing how the Internet can expand our reach," said Heather Deuschlaender, employment manager. The jury is out on effectiveness, but the low cost of this medium virtually assures an expanded use in the future. The Facebook effort is targeted by area and types of businesses.

#### Blue ribbon photographer

Known for photos of his long standing passion, the beauty and lifecycle of butterflies, Eagan consumer David Severson earned a blue ribbon from the Dakota County Fair for a masterful image of a Scarlet Swallowtail.

While vacationing in Florida, he visited Butterfly World, which is renowned for its 80 different species. Severson credits his win to a fast shutter speed and his focus on the area prior to the butterfly's landing. The image is clear and defined.



Proceeds from Severson's greeting card project provided the funds to enlarge and frame the photo for the art show. The cards feature more of his notable butterfly photographs.

#### ProAct Playhouse presents



The ProAct Playhouse acting crew returned to Easter Lutheran Church in Eagan for a new production in the fall, "The Great Time Machine Mystery."

ProAct dramatic presentations bring people together and help to develop personal skills and abilities.



#### Lights recycling expands

Now serving 35 locations, the successful "Recycle Your Holidays" effort by ProAct is collecting Christmas lights and cords for recycling.

"The program is a win-win-win," said Maggie Mattacola, executive director of operations for the Recycling Association of Minnesota. The customers of local businesses like Ace Hardware have a free recycling option, valuable recyclables are kept out of the landfill and meaningful employment opportunities are provided for individuals with disabilities.



A complete list of drop-off locations is available at [proactinc.org](http://proactinc.org).

#### SA to join ProAct for can, bottle recycling

ProAct's can and bottle recycling collection locations are expanding soon to a number of SuperAmerica stores in Dakota and Washington counties.



About 23 will be added, a 74 percent increase in collection points. The "Message in a Bottle" program is currently in place at many Kwik Trip and Holiday Stationstores. It is a partnership with the Recycling Association of Minnesota.

### STAY IN TOUCH WITH DRIVERS – WEAR WARM CLOTHES – NEW GUIDELINES FOR ALL



ProAct is serious about good communication with participants riding its buses and urges people to dress warmly.

#### WILL YOU BE RIDING THE BUS?

Bus drivers need to know when they do not need to pick up an individual in the morning or afternoon. Residential staff and guardians need to let ProAct know if circumstances change and a ride is not needed.

#### ARE YOU DRESSED FOR WINTER?

Drivers will also be watching to be certain that each person is appropriately dressed for winter. If a rider is not wearing

a winter coat, the driver will wait until they get their coat from their house and return. Participants also need gloves or mittens, a hat and boots. "Not only are we concerned for safety in snow and ice and winter winds," said Transportation Coordinator Jane Snyder. "If a breakdown leaves the bus stranded for a short time, ProAct wants everyone to be able to handle an emergency."

A number of participants showed off their winter coats, gloves, hats and boots.



## 'JENNY'S PRAYER' GIVING TO STOP CANCER

Jenny Fuller successfully completed the "Race for the Cure," a Susan G. Komen running event to support cancer research.

She is a proud cancer survivor and started her own project to help others.

Thankful to be healthy, Jenny uses her project to raise awareness and funds for cancer research by doing what she loves, creating beautiful jewelry.

She names her jewelry design "Jenny's Prayer." This is an oversized kilt pin that is carefully laden with a looped dangling chain, unique charms and glass beads, and finally, balanced and softened with a delicate pink ribbon. Assisted by Designated Coordinator Charlotte Eastin, Jenny plans to sell the pins to donate to St. John's Hospital Breast Cancer Unit and also reinvest in the project by buying more beads. The two are talking about prices, funding sources, sale locations and how to keep a supply of vintage jewelry to make more designs.

Now in the starting stages of the project, Jenny is asking for donations of vintage metal jewelry chains or charms and glass beads, not plastic, from unwanted jewelry. And, of course, she can use many types of delicate pink ribbons as well.

**You can help Jenny fund cancer research by donating your vintage jewelry, metal and glass trinkets, chains and beads. Please contact Charlotte Eastin, ceastin@proactinc.org , 651-289-3160**



## NEW ZUMBROTA PROGRAM BEGINS

After a year-long process, ProAct's new Adult Day Care program in Zumbrota has been approved and is receiving senior Goodhue County clients.

"It adds a different dimension to what we already are doing," said Site Manager Jo Erickson. "Broadening our horizons, and theirs, too."

Social interaction is key for seniors, says Erickson, and this program has lots of it. The small town operation at the edge of downtown Zumbrota provides opportunities to get to know workers and shoppers at local businesses.

Adult Day Care gives the person the chance for some valuable interaction with others, within a environment focused on personal improvement and self care.

Truly comprehensive, ADC offers occupational and physical therapy, budgeting help and community participation in a person-centered setting for adults who are functionally impaired. There are a variety of circumstances where safety, security and comfort may become issues

for a person. He or she may have dementia, hearing problems or related conditions.

Participation at ProAct can improve a person's home life situation, and the manager said some people are surprised that a service like this is available.

The program is customized to the individual's needs and desires, said Erickson. Exercise opportunities are also available, and a public health nurse makes twice monthly visits.

With a smaller setting and presence in Zumbrota for 20 years, ProAct is well known in the community. The ADC program complements a similar offering at ProAct's Eagan facility.

Service costs are generally covered through Goodhue County Health and Human Services under the Elder Waiver program. Facility hours are 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on weekdays and Erickson encourages families and team members to come for an introductory tour. She can be reached at 507-732-7888 or jerickson@proactinc.org.



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**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.

## Need Free Help?

ProAct regularly partners with businesses to provide a trainee and trainer to work at their shop or business. In turn, ProAct uses that experience to assess the skills of the client.



Let us offer extra hands to get the work done and you will help us place more individuals into work settings where they can succeed.



Partner with us to find the best match for employment success for people with disabilities.



Contact Heather Deutschlaender at  
**651-289-3163**  
heatherd@proactinc.org

## BOARD CHAIR SAYS PROACT ON FOREFRONT

ProAct Board Chair and lawyer Teri McCloughan said this past year has been a time of many changes in the disabilities field, changes that are here to stay, and the nonprofit is implementing them in the best way possible to serve its clients.

"One of ProAct's biggest strengths is that we have been able to not only react to those changes, but to be on the forefront of implementing them," she said. McCloughan said ProAct is a trendsetter, and its staff under President Steve Ditschler's leadership has "taken the ball and run with it."

More specifically, the changes center around the state's 245D Licensure Requirements that took effect in January. The board of directors is also focusing on strategy and planning to continue ProAct's performance as a strong player in the service provider marketplace.

Providing a glimpse inside of ProAct's board meetings, McCloughan said the members are a very diverse group of professionals who each bring their own level of expertise and contribute to great discussions. As a partner with Stapleton and McCloughan in St. Paul, she focuses on transactional work, real estate and general corporate law.

Ultimately, it comes down to ProAct's consumers. "We always try to remember that that's the whole focus of why we spend our time on the board, to serve the people," McCloughan said.

Much of ProAct strength is in its ability to embrace the uniqueness of each individual's situation and helping that person to reach their full potential, she explained.

"I always tell people that one of my favorite nights of the year is the annual banquet, because you see the camaraderie and positive effect that a community like ProAct has on individuals with disabilities," McCloughan said. People are all different, and the nonprofit helps them to find their place in the world, she explains.

The board chair has been a member of the board since 2006, and had the advantage of familiarity coming in. She was referred by Marty Stapleton, her law partner who preceded her on the board and helped with ProAct's merger more than a decade ago. "Early on ... I did hear quite a bit about ProAct. I always thought it was a very well run organization, with great leadership under Steve (Ditschler) and a very dedicated staff."



*Board Chair Teri McCloughan brings a lawyer's perspective and is helping the organization through a time of change.*