

PROACT PEOPLE ACHIEVING

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Former board member talks Golf Classic



Ken Koch, second from left, has supported the nonprofit for 20-plus years through the ProAct Golf Classic. The 2019 event is August 26.

On the golf course for the ProAct Golf Classic, Ken Koch and his group are the guys in blue, green, white or red, but they always match.

Koch, an IT professional, has been involved with ProAct since the days of the Owobopte name in the 1990s. He served on its board and has been on the ProAct Golf Classic committee many times.

"It's about the mission and the well-run nature of the event itself," said Koch. The Southview Country Club venue and "best ball" format draw competitive and casual golfers who also have many opportunities to win, he said.

"It's a nice course. They've treated us well out there and it's challenging without being too difficult for people who maybe golf once or twice a year." As to the outfits, Koch said others have copied their idea, and he's flattered.

Join us at the ProAct Golf Classic

August 26

Southview Country Club

\$150 golf

\$ 35 dinner only

What: An 18-hole scramble start tournament with lunch, gourmet dinner, games, cart, auctions, raffle and more.

Where: Southview Country Club, West St. Paul

When: Monday, August 26, 10:45 a.m. to 7 p.m., shotgun start at 12 p.m.

Why: For fun, camaraderie and to support people with disabilities.

How: Sign up at proactinc.org, \$150 per golfer, dinner alone is \$35, sponsorships available.

Capitol visit supports staff



Direct service professional Mike Hurley, left and classroom instructor Angi Fleury, lower right, brought ProAct ADS participants to Disability Services Day at the Capitol in March. The large rally focused on improving wages for staff members.

It was a homecoming of sorts, at a place known to many but visited by few- the Minnesota State Capitol.

Direct support professionals (DSPs) from day program and housing providers filled all floors of the Rotunda along with the people with disabilities they serve and family members. The hot issue at the annual Disability Services Day at the Capitol in March was wages for direct support staff. A recent study revealed that DSP wages are 17 percent lower on average when compared to professions requiring similar levels of preparation and training.

"It made me realize that there are a lot more people in the same boat as me," said ProAct Eagan classroom instructor Angi Fleury. "There was a lot of energy. It was fun and loud, but a good loud."

When asked about the importance of staff, participant Michelle Meyer said they treat her with dignity, and help her with boundaries and cognitive skills. "They get me out in the community," she said. "It's very important to me to get out in the community, because if I don't get out in the community, I get sick again because I have a mental illness."

Participant Nancy Strehlow was struck by the immensity of the building, and spoke about how staff help her in daily life.

Fleury said she felt super appreciated, and was encouraged to get to know her participants better and educate others about her work. "I love what I do- my participants, my coworkers, it just all works."

Inside- New Options Greenhouse Sale 5/22-5/24

From the President...

It is gratifying when people working in numerous direct care positions see the positive impact they are having on the lives of the individuals they support. Receiving favorable feedback from those served and their family members is very satisfying. The combination of satisfaction and positive impact makes jobs meaningful for many employed in the field.



The value of quality staff who deliver desired support services is undeniable. We have joined others to stress that point to legislators, and our governor, in hopes that they will support our service delivery system with legislation to help us attract and retain quality employees. I believe the current Legislature realizes this and is taking steps to address some issues. For one thing, there was a cut last year and things look promising for a partial restoration this session.

I'm proud to say we had a group from our ADS (Adult Day Services) department at the Capitol this year. They attended a large rally to support competitive wages for direct service staff. It was affirming to them, and highlighted a need for each of us to share our message with others. People with disabilities have a need for quality staff members who can do the job they love without struggling financially.

One of the strengths of our organization has been accurate financial tracking and reporting. Though he prefers to stay out of the limelight, I must acknowledge the work of our controller, Pat McGuire, who retired after 27 years of service. During his tenure, we had accurate financial statements and clean audits. We appreciate all he did for us and wish him the best in retirement.

I hope to see many of you at our Golf Classic on August 26. You don't need to be a good golfer to enjoy the day. I wish all of you a wonderful summer.

Steven Ditschler

Admission Information

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ProAct's Six Locations

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Red Wing, MN 55066
- New Options - ProAct
792 Canterbury Rd., #132
Shakopee, MN 55379
- 1202 Beaudry Blvd.
Hudson, WI 54016
- 224 S. Main St.
Zumbrota, MN 55992

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ProAct is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.



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

The Gary 'he used to be'



After joining the busy ProAct program in Hudson, Wis., Gary Olson, right, is talking a lot more and enjoying his days. His sister, Debbie Gerhardt, said he now interacts more at home and with family.

Gary Olson, 60, grew up on a farm in western Wisconsin in the 1970s, where he was close to his father, drove tractors and did chores as a teenager. Then, his dad died. Gary, who has a disability, went to live in several group homes.

Watch on



"Dad made Gary do everything that the rest of us did," said Debbie Gerhardt, Gary's sister. He attended other day programs, but his most recent provider closed, which Gerhardt calls a "blessing in disguise." This led him to ProAct in Hudson.

"We've seen a dramatic change in Gary," she said. "He's more verbal . . . much better, more the brother he used to be." ProAct offers outing opportunities every day, social interaction and encouragement to be independent.



Direct service professional Tammy Borchardt said Olson likes to get going, be on the move and participate in community activities.

Olson's mother, La Rayne, said there's more interaction at ProAct and things to do. She said he's become more open and himself. Site Coordinator Margaret Christensen said ProAct offers a lot of stimulation and experiences. "He is a sweet, sweet soul."

ADS expands in Eagan



New ADS participant Brian VanDorpe, left, said ProAct is a good place to be. He and Bob Saylor, another new person in the program, enjoyed an Irish Feast made by staff.

Creating a new and comfortable room that's spacious, ProAct's ADS program in Eagan recently expanded its capacity to accommodate more participants.

"Overall it's very positive," said ADS Coordinator Doug Cowles. "It's always nice to grow and gives us more options." People have greater choices for outings each day with additional class offerings.

A similar program in the south metro had closed, prompting the need. There was a surge of new people at the beginning of the year.

About half of the 99 participants are on the work floor (skills training area) and morning and afternoon groups have activities in the community. Classroom capacity increased from 27 to 40.

Around 80 percent of ADS participants have a brain injury while others are diagnosed with a developmental disability, mental illness or autism, Cowles explains.

Ways you can support us

- Volunteer
- Golf Classic sponsor
- Vehicle Fund
- Endowment Fund
- Donate online
- Amazon smile



Contact Patty Carlson - 651-289-3149 - pcarlson@proactinc.org

Upcoming Events

details at proactinc.org

New Options - ProAct Greenhouse

Sale— Buy plants and support leisure activities for participants. May 22-24, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 792 Canterbury Road South, #132, Shakopee.



Person-Centered Thinking Training

Two-day interactive course for continuing education credit. July 23-24, 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., ProAct- Red Wing, 204 Mississippi Avenue. 651-289-3145

ProAct Golf Classic— Southview Country Club, West St. Paul, August 26, 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sponsorships available.

ProAct briefs:

Writing skills training brings many gifts



Community integration can take many forms, including the written word. Fans of country singer Jason Aldean wrote to the artist with details about why they liked his music. The fan mail writing class received a surprising response, said Red Wing instructor Teri Birdsall. About two weeks later, a large box arrived with Jason Aldean T-shirts, lunch boxes and flashlights. Ringleaders Andraea Hessler, smaller image at left, and Linda Ingersoll said the singer made them feel less stressed and gave them energy.

Youth pre-employment services extended

Grant funding has been extended to assist more high school students with disabilities in Dakota and Scott counties to explore jobs, career pathways and more.

The multi-faceted effort is called ProACTION Pre-employment Transition Services, or Pre-ETS, for students in ninth grade through age 21. "More than anything, it's expanding the knowledge of what could potentially be next for these individuals, said Kim Feller, ProAct VP of programs and services.

Students receive job exploration support, learn how to develop a road map for future school and/or employment, visit post-secondary schools in the area, receive classroom-based work readiness training and gain actual work experience in the community. They also learn how to advocate for themselves and grow their self-confidence through personal support and positive peer experiences.

Exercise benefits with reach in Red Wing



Fitness instruction and equipment have long been a strong point at ProAct in Red Wing. Sometimes, the simplest of games can prompt greater participation. A balloon toss game promotes movement, strength and agility to challenge players in a fun group experience. Direct service professionals Lori Clemens, Brittany Smith and Brea Meincke got everyone caught up in it, drawing in even the most reluctant. The most popular games have a target to aim for and music to get moving. Red Wing offers three exercise classes daily and outside options as weather permits.



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Watch a video about participant Mike Burgess, who helped build ProAct's main building, read of the dogged determination of Ed Hubley, meet our newest board member and more in the ProAct Post, a publication delivered by email.

To sign up text ProAct to:

22828

Controller retires after 27 years



Flanked by ProAct veteran retirees Carolyn Dobis and Dave Cavalier, Pat McGuire, second from right, was wished well by staff at a breakfast event. At left are Director Sally Ogren and President Steven Ditschler.

A steady influence who kept a close eye on the books, ProAct Controller Pat McGuire contributed to more than a quarter-century of continuous improvement at the nonprofit. He retired on May 1.

"Every year, there seemed to be growth and different opportunities, which kept things interesting," he said. The controller was here when a financial turnaround began in the early 1990s. At the time, ProAct was leasing space at another Eagan site before it built the headquarters building in 1998. This was followed by rapid expansion under the leadership of President Steven Ditschler.

McGuire said he'll miss certain routines and the opportunity to interact with some great people at ProAct. He has no plans to work in the future.

The retiree said he hopes to play more tennis and golf. Another priority is to get away to somewhere warm in the winter.



A cast of 21 participants, four support staff and a volunteer produced "Welcome to Our World." The 90-minute show gave the audience a taste of daily life for people with disabilities.



A game show with rude hosts preceded action scenes and examples of talented workers and people in the arts with different abilities.



Julie Johnson, left, president of the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation, presented a Life Enrichment Award to Co-directors Matt Briggs and Amanda Thomm, and Production Director Kelly Champion.

Prairie Fire Children's Theater engages Red Wing



Energetic Prairie Fire Children's Theater actors returned to ProAct in Red Wing with drama and enthusiasm to engage 30 participants. A five senses demonstration taught skills in observation, questioning, listening for sound sources and memory. The St. Cloud group has done several workshops here and one leader said people at ProAct have been increasingly willing to participate.

ProAct Playhouse wows audience, wins award