

Working together.



Growing together.

The Newsletter of AccessAbility, Inc.

Fall 2003

“Connecting With the community” Open House

The weather cooperated with a beautiful sunny day on Tuesday, September 9th for the “Connecting With the Community” Open House, Ice Cream Social and Theme Basket Raffle. The main focus of the open house was on real training and work opportunities resulting from our business services, as well as the variety of program offerings available at AccessAbility.

Seven of our business partners were here to help us tell our story to the community. Representatives from diverse industries including medical, telecommunications, mailing, docu-



furniture retail were stationed throughout the facility tour. Our partners highlighted how our workforce contributes to the success of their businesses. These companies provide work opportunities in the areas of assembly, packaging, soldering, mailing services, document processing, electrical testing, food packaging, inventory control, and quality control.

AccessAbility program participants may serve as a workforce in our on-site production facility, in a work team at our partners’ facilities, or hired as an employee of our business partners.

ment processing, marketing and communications, food, and audio/video

We wish to thank the following partners for their contribution to our open house and the many training and work opportunities that are a result of our successful relationship.

University of Minnesota Addressing & Mailing Services/Campus Mail
Neil Grass, Manager
Mickey Gardas, Production Supervisor
Mr. Grass also serves as a member of our program advisory committee.
Solbrekk
Larry Phelps, Senior Account Executive

Allied Vaughn
Rich Wogen, General Manager
Jackie Bryan, Production Supervisor
Gyrus Medical
Francisco Orench, Manufacturing Mgr.
Dave Harding, Production Supervisor

Sanus Systems
Phil Carlson, Purchasing Manager.
Atlas Manufacturing
Mark Engel, President
Jamie Berger, Quality Engineer
Cocina de Vega
Jim Byrd, Chief Operating Officer

Many of the attendees were amazed at the business approach that AccessAbility has taken to provide unique opportunities to meet the needs of all constituents in the community, including businesses. They were impressed with the changes in AccessAbility, especially the variety of work and the various skill level train-

ing that has evolved. Individuals really have a variety of program choices available to meet their needs throughout their lives.

It was the first year of our very successful theme basket raffle. Chris Conangla of UPN 29 provided fun and entertainment at the open house as

he drew the names of the 36 winners of the theme baskets.

The ice cream social, sponsored by Marshall Field’s Distribution Center, was a real treat for attendees. We thank our Board and Business Advisory Board members who volunteered to serve the ice cream.

Ticket to Work Coming Soon

This fall Minnesota, a Phase III state, joins the rest of the country in the Social Security Administration's (SSA) the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program.

What is Ticket to Work?

This legislation, passed into law in 1999, establishes a Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program which would provide SSDI and SSI disability beneficiaries with a ticket they may use to obtain vocational rehabilitation services, employment services, and other support services from an employment network of their choice.

What is the benefit of Ticket to Work to the beneficiary?

It allows a social security beneficiary to have more choices than previously available about going to work, earning income, and receiving continued health care benefits.

How will a beneficiary know if they are eligible for a ticket?

Through SSA mailings, eligible SSI and SSDI beneficiaries receive "Tickets" from the Social Security Administration. If beneficiaries receiving these Tickets want to go to work, they contact and "assign" their Ticket to an organization called an "Employment Network" (EN).

What is an Employment Network (EN)?

Any entity that can take responsibility for the coordination or delivery of the above services can apply to be an Employment Network. AccessAbility is an Employment Network.

What happens next if you receive a ticket?

This is a voluntary employment-related Program. When an individual gets a Ticket, he or she has a choice whether or not to use the Ticket, as



Barbara Arnold, President

Message from the President

Dear Friends of AccessAbility:

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

More choices for more people is the current result we are seeing at AccessAbility, Inc. Our dedicated staff has overcome several funding setbacks over the past few months and has expanded program and business services in support of our mission. Thinking outside the box is a main part of this success. We continually strive to initiate new innovative ways to create vocational training, employment opportunities and community inclusive activities for people with disabilities and other barriers.

A concerted effort was placed on understanding the impact of the current economy on local businesses and determining what role an organization such as ours could play in providing workforce solutions to meet their current and future needs. This approach has led to the development of several successful business partnerships. The end result is more employment and training for more people. It has also helped the business community understand the resources of our organization and the individuals we serve. A better understanding of each other's needs leads to win-win relationships.

In addition to employment and training choices for individuals, we have expanded our community inclusion and recreation/leisure activities. Many individuals are transitioning from full time to part time work. Others are at a stage of their life where they are more interested in community and social activities. AccessAbility, Inc. offers a continuum of services that ensures choice throughout an individual's life.

We are committed to providing more choices to more people. Thank you to all the friends of AccessAbility that support us in our efforts.

Barbara Arnold, President

well as when to use the Ticket. If they decide to "assign" it (use it), they take it to a participating Employment Network.

For more information about the Ticket to Work program, call AccessAbility, Inc. at (612) 331-5958 or visit www.yourtickettowork.com.

Employment Opportunities Increase in Response to Business Needs

AccessAbility, Inc. provides customized employment solutions to meet the needs of the business community. This reciprocates job opportunities for individuals served. Employment solutions range from direct hire within a business, to a work team at a business site, and to out-source in our on-site employment and training facility.

With continued uncertainty in the economy, demand for the work team solution is on the rise. AccessAbility has responded to the demand by restructuring its Community Employment component as a standalone department that supports individuals from all programs—Welfare to Work, Extended Employment and Day Training and Habilitation. Our goal is to expand employment opportunities for individuals and, at the same time, meet the needs of businesses.

One of the key challenges of businesses is how to control costs in a fluctuating business environment. The work team solution provides flexibility of a workforce that adapts to business needs. Depending on the needs, a mix of individuals, usually from different programs with different skill levels and backgrounds, work together for the desired solution. An AccessAbility working lead on-site with the work team is responsible for supervision, training, and quality control. The business can expect qualified workers and guaranteed attendance on a daily basis because the team is created from a pool of competent AccessAbility workers. The work team solution makes sense for employers looking for ways to effectively manage business in a shifting economy.

Employment opportunities have expanded for individuals served as a

result of the increasing demand for work teams. Individuals have the opportunity to experience a variety of jobs, improve work skills, adapt to various work situations, build confidence and be competitive in a business setting. All of these things help prepare them for successful individual placement. In some cases, work team experience leads to direct hire with the business.

Barry's story is a good example of how a work team experience can lead to successful individual placement. As an Extended Employment participant working in AccessAbility's on-site facility, Barry was chosen as one of a five-person work team to assemble membrane filter packs at a local fluid purification, filtration, and separation manufacturing plant. Eleven months after the project began, the work team was no longer needed. Barry applied for a position since he had enjoyed doing the work and had excelled at it. Barry was hired as an assembler at the standard wage with complete benefits and has been promoted to equipment technician. Barry receives follow up services from AccessAbility staff to provide support needed to maintain his employment and continue his growth.

Individuals served as well as community businesses can choose which AccessAbility employment solutions can best meet their needs. Increase in demand for the work team solution has expanded employment opportunities for individuals. If you believe a work team may benefit your business, please contact Chris Jordan Greider at (612) 331-5958.



Volunteer Ginny Coyle

Whether it is planting, cutting plants, or simply getting their hands dirty, Ginny Coyle brings patience, creativity and enthusiasm when she works with AAI consumers in our horticultural program. Ginny volunteers several hours each week in our greenhouse, and works directly with participants in each of the different program components. Ginny, who teaches horticulture at Century College in White Bear Lake, brings her vast knowledge and experience in horticulture to AccessAbility. Her talents have been vital in the growth of our horticulture program, which started in 2001. Ginny enjoys being able to take the program in new directions such as a sensory garden developed to stimulate the senses through the use of specific plants for texture and scent. Ginny will also be serving as a member of the newly formed Horticulture Advisory Committee. The goal of the committee will be to expand the program in new ways both recreationally and vocationally.

Ginny likes how the Horticulture Program benefits all of AccessAbility's programs. For example, the tomatoes and peppers they grew were later used to make salsa that will be sold at the holiday boutique next month. She said she loves working with the participants and enjoys seeing how horticulture crosses many boundaries and can be adapted to age, language, or physical abilities.

If you are interested in volunteering at AccessAbility, please contact Laura Hollinger at 612-331-5958.

Senior Solutions - Just for Seniors



Seniors Ron (left) and Bruce (right) enjoy a pet companion activity provided through the Senior Solutions program.

The needs of each of us change throughout our lifetime and the people that AccessAbility serves are no exception. We offer a variety of program options to meet these changing needs and a Senior Program is our newest offering. AccessAbility began to look at the interests of our senior population and determined that these individuals have needs and desires that can be very different than that of individuals who are younger. As a result, a senior program was developed as part of the Accessing Community Experiences (ACE) Program called Senior Solutions which is open to anyone age 55 or older.

Ron's story is a great example of how the changing needs and interests of one consumer were met by different programs at different times. Ron became a participant in AccessAbility's Day Training and Habilitation program in 1987. His primary focus was on work and for the next ten years he pursued a variety of work opportunities. As Ron's interests

changed through the years, he made the transition from full-time work to part-time work by joining the Everyday Life Experiences (ELE) program. In this program, Ron participated in work projects 50% of the time and spent the other 50% of his time participating in structured classes such as arts and crafts, cooking, gardening and others. In the summer of

2002 at the age of 59, Ron decided that he no longer wanted to focus on work and transferred into the ACE program. In ACE, Ron can still choose to work but the main focus of this program is recreation and leisure exploration with an emphasis on community inclusion outings. Ron is now a senior and has chosen to participate in Senior Solutions, a component of the ACE program.

In Senior Solutions, Ron has opportunities to participate in activities in the community with other seniors. He has attended congregating dining at a Minneapolis Community Center, senior Bingo at the Brooklyn Park community center, and senior programs at the Mall of America sponsored by the Active Stars senior program, to name a just a few of the activities. Ron even attended a Seniors Day Twins game which he said was a "happy time" for him. When asked how he feels about Seniors Solutions, Ron stated, "I like being here". Ron also participates in a Seniors Gardening Group in AccessAbility's newly built greenhouse, a weekly senior exercise group, and a variety of other activities focusing on his interests.



Join us for the 7th Annual Holiday Boutique

Thursday, December 11, 2003

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM



Crafts, decorations, candles, candy and more!





Americorp Service Member Ethan Sutton assists Friends Together participants in a fused beading activity.



Stephanie Albleiter, Americorp Service Member, assists with the Welfare to Work program.

Work In Progress AmeriCorps Program

Two new faces have been added to AccessAbility's team and are expected to be around for at least a year. Ethan Sutton and Stephanie Ableiter came on board through the Work In Progress (WIP) AmeriCorps Program, which falls under the National Service AmeriCorps program, sometimes referred to as the "domestic Peace Corps."

The WIP AmeriCorps Program is a partnership between five organizations: Rise, Inc., Opportunity Partners, Consumer Survivor Network, Lifetrack Resources, and AccessAbility, Inc. WIP AmeriCorps received federal and state grant funding through Serve Minnesota to serve people with disabilities, refugees, and the people who are unemployed or underemployed. The focus of the WIP AmeriCorps Program is community integration and job placement. Members will help individuals throughout the Twin Cities Metro area, Chisago County and the St. Cloud area reach their career goals and/or become integrated into their communities.

There are 5 AmeriCorps positions still available with AccessAbility including Case Aide for the Veterans

Administration, Community Employment Assistant, Job Coach and Follow-up Assistant, Vocational Training Float and Work Floor Trainer. In addition to service experience, members will receive a modest living allowance, health insurance, training, student loan deferment and, upon completing their service term, an education award.

Ethan Sutton is a University of Minnesota student studying architectural art and design. Ethan was looking for a position that was both meaningful and fun. He serves primarily with the Friends Together Program and some of his service responsibilities include assisting with program planning, providing direction as needed to volunteers and coordinating transportation for community activities.

Stephanie Ableiter has a graduate degree in Counseling Psychology and Psychological Services. She is hoping to use this service year to try out the employment-counseling field to determine if it would be a good fit for her. As a Welfare Case Management Aide, Stephanie's responsibilities include assisting with counseling services that promote independence and

individual problem solving, recommending the use of consultants like interpreters and psychologists, providing participants with constructive feedback on work performance and working with employers.

We are glad to have both Ethan and Stephanie on our team and hope this will be a successful service year for them. For more information regarding open service positions with AccessAbility, Inc. or about WIP AmeriCorps Program, go to www.americorps.org or send an e-mail to: pnoreau@rise.org.

Remember Your Employer Matching Gift Programs

Employers recognize the importance of giving back to the community and encourage their employees to financially support eligible non-profit organizations. Many employers have Employee Gift-Matching programs that will match the gifts their employees give to their favorite organizations. Please inquire if your employer has one of these programs.



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Based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, AccessAbility is a diversified employment training center that provides training and services to help individuals transitioning from welfare to work and individuals with disabilities become self-sufficient through successful, long-term employment. Recreational, social, retirement, and other programs are also provided.

For further questions about our newsletter, contact Theresa Biggerstaff, Editor, at (612) 331-5958 or tbiggerstaff@accessability.org. Please forward all address changes to our Development Department.

Our Mission

To provide opportunities for self-sufficiency for people with barriers to employment and community inclusion.

This newsletter is available in large print upon request.

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