

Working together.



Growing together.

The Newsletter of AccessAbility, Inc.

Spring 2005



Amy Jones Employee of the Year 2004

"Amy is always willing to listen and help adjust the program to benefit the consumers as much as possible...Amy is often found running an activity in the ACE room or in the nursing department doing tasks that most of us would never want to do...As busy as Amy is with her day to day work, she finds time to help in other areas of the company and she has encouraged her team to do the same... Amy never micro manages, she allows each one of us to do our job in the way which best uses our abilities."

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Amie's Story

Amie's life nowadays is very different from what it used to be. She was born and raised in The Republic of Gambia, West Africa. Gambia is about the size of the state of Maryland, has a population of 1.36 million, a tropical climate, and a wide variety of ethnic groups. Education is voluntary but most girls voluntarily drop out of school and get married by puberty for fear of pregnancy out of wedlock which is shameful to the entire family.

When Amie was old enough to go to school, her family couldn't afford to pay tuition for all of the children so only the boys were enrolled. However, everyone enrolled in Arabic school because it is free. When Amie was fourteen, one of her teachers, a 35-year old Somali refugee living in Gambia, proposed to her and she accepted. They had a big, three-day wedding and Amie's husband was free to take his new wife to live with him in the refugee camp, where she lived until they joined members of her husband's family here in the US.

Within a year of moving to a new country, she experienced a miscarriage, ran away from an abusive marriage with her child, hitched a ride to Minnesota where she knew no one, lived in a homeless



shelter, got a job for the first time in her life, and moved into her first apartment.

Shortly after moving to the Twin Cities, Amie started her first paid work experience with AccessAbility in 1999 and was placed with a community organization in early 2000.

In 2003, Amie returned to AccessAbility because she was laid off from her job. She enrolled in the three-month paid work training program with the hope that she would improve and develop new skills to increase her chances of finding a decent-paying job.

"I noticed that a couple of good workers were hired as full-time staff after they completed their three-month training. I always enjoy working at AccessAbility because the people are nice and they make me feel comfortable so I thought it would be a good thing if I could stay," Amie said. It was then that she decided to speak to someone about becoming an AccessAbility staff member.

Thanks to the open-door policy at AccessAbility, she knocked on the President's door and Barbara invited her in. Amie expressed her desire to become a full time employee by calling attention to the extra

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New Board Members Taylor and Foley

AccessAbility, Inc. is proud to welcome Lisa Taylor and Patrick Foley as the two newest members of our Board of Directors. Lisa and Pat both bring skills and experience that add great value to our Board.



Lisa Taylor

Lisa Taylor served as Courage Center's Senior Director of Volunteer Services for 12 years, retiring in January 2003. Prior to Courage Center, Lisa was the Executive Director of Minnesota Retiree Volunteer Center where she worked with corporations to establish and support retiree volunteer programs. Lisa has also served as the student intern and volunteer coordinator for Washburn Child Guidance Center and as a partner in Board Development Consultants which provides management and leadership training for non-profit boards.

As a volunteer, Lisa directed the development of the Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, the first such facility in the state of Minnesota. It celebrated 20 years of service in 2003. She has also provided an array of workshops in volunteer management through a variety of volunteer organizations, the University of St. Thomas, and Hamline University.

Lisa is also helping to start AccessAbility's first Strategic Development Committee.

Pat is currently Vice President of Fulfillment at Merrill Communications, LLC, in St. Paul. He is accountable for the fulfillment and digital print operations in Minnesota, Ohio, and Massachusetts as well as the Print Service organization which is primarily located in New York City. He has been part of Merrill



Pat Foley

since 1996 and has held a variety of financial, operational, and acquisition-

Message from the President

Dear Friends of AccessAbility:

There is definitely a feeling of springtime here at AccessAbility. A feeling of warmth and accomplishment for the successful year that we completed combined with anticipation and excitement of new things to come.

We had a record year in 2004 providing immediate work and recreation/leisure options for near 700 individuals. Although opportunities for people sprouted up in many directions, as an organization we became more focused on controlling the growth to opportunities that will sustain long-term results for our consumers. Our new site and operations for Document Conversion is a major effort in accomplishing this goal.

The development of our business relationships is resulting in more jobs with higher wages and brighter futures. We continue to evolve our role in the economic development of our community by understanding our local business needs and providing innovative workforce solutions and value-added services.

We are expanding our collaborative efforts to optimize results and prevent duplication of efforts. Our Ready to Work™ partnership with four peer organizations and United Way is one example of our commitment in this area. Our training and work program with organizations that support low-income families as well as immigrants and refugees is another.

Our continuum of services in the Day Training and Habilitation program is diversifying to meet the needs of those who no longer desire full time work. The creativity of our team in providing social integration for these individuals is adding significant value to many lives.

AccessAbility is experiencing new growth from the seeds it has planted in recent years and the strong roots developed serving our community over the past 57 years. The talented and dedicated team at AccessAbility has worked hard to achieve a 53% growth over the past three years. And, we are committed to pursue new opportunities in the future.

It is the warmth and generosity of our friends that nourishes our programs. We thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to our mission.

Barbara Arnold
President



Barbara Arnold, President

related leadership positions in both St. Paul and Boston. Prior to joining Merrill, Pat held financial positions with Valspar Corporation, Cray Research, Inc. and Price Waterhouse.

Pat has an MBA in Venture Management from the University of St. Thomas and a BA in Business Administration from the University of Notre Dame, where he was a key leader of the varsity hockey team. He is also a

Certified Public Accountant.

For many years, Pat volunteered with the Big Brother program. He has had a long association with AccessAbility through his sister-in-law Pam Sunder, AccessAbility's Day Training and Habilitation (DTH) Program Manager. Pat is also serving as a member of AccessAbility's Business Development Advisory Board.

AccessAbility, Inc. Expands With a Second Facility



In November 2004, AccessAbility, Inc. opened the doors to its new, nearby satellite facility. The facility is now home to its growing Document Conversion business that includes the newly branded AAI DataGuard document destruction business.

AAI DataGuard offers government agencies and commercial businesses a secure and reliable resource for document destruction. Since more and more companies are choosing to have documents destroyed after they are converted from paper to electronic images, the expansion of this service was strategic to complement the Document Conversion business. Both services provide new training and work opportunities and higher wages for people with barriers to employment.

AccessAbility has been an approved vendor to provide both document conversion and document destruction services for the U.S. government since the fall of 2002. Federal contracting officers can find our listing in the General Services Administration's (GSA's) supply schedule number 36. In

2004, we also obtained a master contract with the State of Minnesota for Scanning and Imaging services. AccessAbility has been awarded several Federal and State contracts and has many commercial business customers both large and small.

The new site was established in response to a large increase in demand for AccessAbility's document destruction and document conversion services by local businesses and government agencies. Much of the



new demand is related to federal and state legislative changes regarding the privacy, storage and disposal of documents and other media. To meet this exciting challenge, we added space that includes updated equipment, enhanced procedures to maximize efficiency, and a 24-hour, close-monitored camera system and other equipment and personnel verification processes for added security. Best of all, the new space allowed the creation of additional jobs for people.

AAI DataGuard's document destruction process was developed

based on the National Association for Information Destruction (NAID) standards for security and ethics. NAID is a national accreditation institution. Modeling the security and process on the NAID standards offers a reliable and secure destruction option for customers.

Document conversion and destruction work opportunities benefit people in all of our main program areas with emphasis on serving individuals with disabilities. Program participants engage in data entry, scanning, OCR conversion, document preparation, and document destruction activities. The variety of work provides opportunities for a diverse level of abilities from very simple and repetitive to more highly skilled and technical. These jobs prepare people for competitive community employment with opportunities for career advancement. Wages in these businesses tend to be much higher than entry level.

Due to this additional location and the employment opportunities it provides, 15 people with developmental disabilities in our Day Training and Habilitation program are working at this site. Currently 25 individuals with other disabilities are also employed at this site with the potential of many more.



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contributions she was making in the production area. She filled in as lead worker when needed, served as a translator between Somali workers and production staff, learned new jobs quickly and often helped others working next to her to get up to speed. Amie's bravery and skills earned her full-time employment as a line lead on the production work floor.

Since becoming a full-time staff member of AccessAbility, she has been able to purchase a reliable car

and, as a single mom, is able to do more of the things most kids take for granted, like eating out or buying a toy.

Amie is grateful for the opportunities available to her and her child here in the US but admits that what she misses the most is being with her family (20 siblings plus nieces, nephews and in-laws). Several months ago she invited her family, friends and co-workers to celebrate with her as she became a U.S. citizen. Now armed with a US passport and a couple of

weeks of vacation, Amie is excitedly planning a trip back to Gambia and talks about it nonstop.

"My mother is very proud of me because as a single parent I'm taking care of my child, surviving without the help of my family and helping my extended family financially whenever I can. My mother is the person I want to see the most!"

Like her mother, we too are proud of Amie and tell her often that she ought to be proud of herself.



September 2004 Open House

AccessAbility, Inc. hosted its "Innovate. Create. Communicate. Participate." open house and 2nd annual theme basket raffle on Thursday, September 16, 2004. The open house, an awareness and fundraising event with a taste of the tropics, featured tours of the production and program areas, a networking resource area, tropical treats, and the 2nd annual theme basket raffle.

This year there were 43 different

theme baskets donated to our organization with revenue from the raffle exceeding the prior year by

Innovate. CREATE. COMMUNICATE. Participate.

62%. Cheryl Kaye of KS95 provided fun and entertainment as she drew the winning tickets. Special appreciation goes to Cheryl and all of our basket donors, many of them staff members and their family and friends.

The theme basket raffle and open house are important in the effort to raise awareness about AccessAbility.

It highlights the needs of people living and working in our communities and showcases the abilities and contributions of our program participants.

Look for more information regarding upcoming events and the 3rd annual theme basket raffle on our website, www.accessability.org.

Ready To Work™ Collaboration

AccessAbility, Inc., Lifetrack Resources, Opportunity Partners, RESOURCE, Inc., and Rise, Inc., in collaboration with Greater Twin Cities United Way, created Ready to Work™ in July of 2004.

The purpose of this partnership is to open opportunities for workers who have been traditionally seen as "disadvantaged" and giving them access to jobs with good pay and benefits that help them to achieve self-sufficiency.

Ready to Work™ is aimed at providing Twin Cities companies, especially the largest employers, access to a workforce of over 20,000 potential employees that use the training and placement services of these non-profit organizations.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Do you want to become more involved with AccessAbility? Would you like to share your talent and time? Here are a few ways you can help.

- **Program Participant Picnic**
Tuesday, June 21, 2005 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Help to set-up, grill and serve food, and clean-up.
- **State Fair Outing**
Friday, September 2, 2005 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Help program participants enjoy a day at the fair! Tickets included.

Can you play an instrument? Do you know how to scrapbook or have a craft talent to share in a class? Do you have stories about your travels to share with "Arm Chair Travelers?" Would you like to join the Red Hatters? Do you like to paint, do other maintenance, or work in the garden? Are you interested in board service?

Contact Laura Hollinger at 612-331-5958, lhollinger@accessability.org or go to Volunteer Resource Center website: www.volunteertwincities.org.

The partners in Ready to Work™ are working together as a centralized resource for connecting to large employers and offering their placement, assembly, and processing services through a single entity.

Workers are available as direct hire, in supervised work teams, or for outsourced work through the partners' on-site production facilities.



A.C.E. Founds Red Hat Society Chapter

When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple, with a red hat that doesn't go...

This is the opening line of the poem that started the Red Hat Society. What is that you may ask? The Red Hat Society is a nationwide organization of chapters made up of women age 50 and older who decided they would embrace their age and have some fun with it. The only requirements to participate in a chapter of this elite society is that you are 50 or older, want to have a good time getting together once per month, and that you will wear a red hat and something purple when you go out. The ladies of the Accessing Community Experiences (A.C.E.) program reviewed those simple requirements, and decided, "Hey, we can do that." So the A.C.E. ladies of AccessAbility, Inc. have founded their own official chapter of the Red Hat Society called the "**Wonderful Women on Wheels.**" We have 7 Red Hatters (ladies who are 50 or older) and one Pink Hatter (someone under 50 who must wear a pink hat and something lavender until age 50) making up the "**Wonderful Women on Wheels.**"

A special fundraising activity was held in February 2005 to kick off the start of the "**Wonderful Women on Wheels**" chapter of the Red Hat Society and raise money so each

woman could purchase their own red hat. The activity consisted of giving AAI staff the opportunity to "hat" someone, which meant choosing someone they'd like to see don the festive red hat and purple boa for a donation. If you were hatted, you had to wear this attractive attire for 2 hours. Not only did this create many great photo opportunities, everyone had a lot of fun participating. Best of all, over \$300 was raised and the proceeds enabled each lady to go shopping and purchase the red hat of their choice.

Once established, others will be invited to join our chapter. We look forward to all the new opportunities creating our own chapter will bring and spending time with ladies our age, having fun, and letting everyone know that at 50 you only start to act younger!

If you are interested in joining our chapter of the Red Hat Society or would like more information on how you can be involved, please contact Amy Jones at 612-331-5958.



Amy Jones continued from pg. 1

These are just a few words from the many nominations Amy received that describe the kind of person she is and how deserving she is of this honor. Amy, who has worked at AccessAbility as the Accessing Community Experiences (A.C.E.) program supervisor for 8 years, also earned this honor in 1998. She has been the driving force in developing different programs to meet the changing needs of A.C.E. participants. Due to her vision, we now have a Senior Solutions component for our senior participants as well as a new chapter of the Red Hat Society in the A.C.E program.

When asked what she enjoys most about her job, Amy said "My favorite thing about working here is finding an opportunity for my consumers that I know they will be excited about and will involve them in the community. Our Red Hat Society chapter is such an exciting project for me because the ladies of the A.C.E. Program are so excited and it brings forth so many great opportunities for them to spend time with other women and to connect with others in the community. I have enjoyed providing participants with activities they may never have had the opportunity to experience, whether it is driving a pontoon boat for the first time, going to the State Fair, or experiencing a historic paddleboat ride down the Mississippi River. Seeing their faces and watching their excitement makes everything worthwhile."

Congratulations to Amy on her dedication to AccessAbility and commitment to finding new and innovative opportunities that best meet the needs of the people we serve. Another ballot sums it up best by saying, "Amy truly represents our organization and mission well."



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Based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, AccessAbility provides immediate work opportunities for adults with barriers to employment and a broad choice of services to meet individual long-term needs. Populations we serve include people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees and unemployed or underemployed individuals.

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.

Board of Directors

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Mohamed Jibrell

Goodwill-Easter Seals

Pat Foley

Merrill Communications, LLC

Lisa Taylor

Retired, Courage Center

Spring Plant Sale

Thursday and Friday,
May 19-20, 2005
9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.



Thursday and Friday,
June 2-3, 2005
9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.



ANNUALS • PERENNIALS
VEGETABLES • HOUSE PLANTS
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Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.



AccessAbility
Incorporated

360 Hoover St. Northeast
Minneapolis, MN 55413

612-331-5958 v/tty
612-331-2448 fax
E-mail: aai@accessability.org
Web site: www.accessability.org



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