

Working together.



Growing together.

Volume 1

Winter 2003



**Jennifer  
Mozdin**

**Employee of  
the Year 2002**

Jennifer Mozdin was chosen by her co-workers as AccessAbility's Employee of the Year 2002. Known for her positive spirit, willingness to help out and can-do attitude, Jennifer earned this honor for her outstanding work as the  
**Employee, to 5**

## AccessAbility's Technology Related Job Training and Placement Program

Dawn, a single mother receiving benefits from MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program), was unemployed with little or no work history. Transportation and childcare issues were difficult barriers to overcome in sustaining employment at a livable wage. In the summer of 2002, she enrolled in TechReach, AccessAbility's A+ computer repair technician training program. While Dawn was learning valuable technical skills to succeed in the workplace, she was also learning how to utilize resources to obtain childcare and transportation. Today, Dawn is one of 17 graduates of the TechReach Project and is employed by a local technical company.

Dawn's story is just one of the successes resulting from the TechReach Project which was funded with the help of a WISE (Welfare Innovative Solutions to Employment) grant from Hennepin County in 2002. Based on the positive outcomes achieved, AccessAbility was chosen to receive a \$46,000 WISE



Barbara Arnold and Mayor R.T. Rybak, City of Minneapolis

grant from the Department of Human Services for its technology related training and placement program for the year 2003. The City of Minneapolis Empowerment Zone (EZ) chose AccessAbility to receive a \$146,000 two-year grant for this program. The project, christened "Project Connect," selected for this funding will work with a variety of partners to provide customized training, job development, and job placement into office

**Technology, to 3**

## Introducing TechAbility

In October 2002, AccessAbility introduced its newest DTH component, TechAbility. TechAbility is an innovative program that combines document processing with data entry. This newest DTH option gives our consumers the opportunity for work in higher technology that previously was not available.

The consumers in this program really enjoy the work and have greatly

broadened their skills. Theresa, a TechAbility consumer, previously had no computer skills. Through the use of  
**TechAbility, to 6**



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## New AccessAbility Board Members Harry and Jibrell



Paul L. Harry

AccessAbility, Inc. is proud to welcome Paul L. Harry and Mohamed Jibrell as the two newest members of our Board of Directors. Paul L. Harry, is Manager of New

Business Development at Martin Financial Services, Inc., a Twin Cities based company that provides financial planning, business insurance and employee benefit insurance. Harry's extensive background in business includes working with organizations in the areas of pre-press, new business development, insurance benefit, sales, marketing and planning.

In 1997 he helped launch and was co-owner of Outsource One, a Human Resources company. Prior to that, he headed the pre-press division of PGI Companies, a statewide printing and direct mail company with headquarters in Minnetonka. He was responsible for sales and operations of both pre-press and printing divisions at PGI.

Harry has worked with the Children's Cancer Research Fund, Minneapolis United Way, Cub scouts and as a volunteer baseball coach. He also served on the board of the Human Resource Planning Society.

Mohamed Jibrell is a cross-cultural trainer and employment consultant and is currently working with Goodwill-Easter Seals. He also made a series of presentations on Somali culture through University United, Inc. In 2002,



Mohamed Jibrell



Barbara Arnold, President

## Message from the President

### Dear Friends of AccessAbility:

As we enter 2003 we bring forward the positive momentum gained from the hard work and dedication of AccessAbility, Inc. staff, consumers, volunteers and the community at large in 2002. With this drive, we will maintain a positive perspective and a "can do" attitude as we face the many uncertainties of our present time that affect not only AccessAbility, Inc., but many other organizations (non-profits and for profits) in Minnesota and other parts of the country.

Let us review a few of the positive forces that we have going for us:

- \* A consumer base that is growing, both in number and needs. In 2002, 498 individuals benefited from the opportunities and services provided by AccessAbility. That is an 11 percent increase over the previous year.
- \* A dedicated staff that is talented, resourceful, and relentless in pursuing our mission.
- \* New and innovative programs that are successfully moving individuals from unemployment to full employment. Three of such programs are Tech Ability, Project Connect and Horticultural training.
- \* A connection to our community and support for our programs as shown by the City of Minneapolis Empowerment Zone and Hennepin County WISE grants received for 2003, providing more training opportunities and growing our non government revenue stream.
- \* New business partners that understand the value that we can add to their business. These partners plan to significantly expand their business with AccessAbility, Inc. in 2003.
- \* Dedicated supporters and volunteers that provide time, talent, and resources to help support our mission.

Remaining positive during uncertain times can be a challenge. For example, the economic environment is affecting many aspects of our business, especially the number of available jobs for those in need. In addition, the state deficit and budget balancing process may potentially impact our human services funding. Furthermore, funders are receiving increased requests against shrinking asset bases, making it more difficult to secure funding to meet our needs. These, combined with rising health care costs, growing business insurance premiums and increasing operating costs, are issues we will have to tackle.

Yes, we have challenges facing us this year but more importantly, AccessAbility, Inc. has a strong purpose. If we stay positive and don't let these uncertainties get the best of us, the purpose for which we exist will be the fuel that feeds our success.

So it is with perseverance and a positive "can do" attitude that we approach 2003. After all, we work with individuals that exhibit these characteristics to us day after day and year after year!

Barbara Arnold, President

Jibrell worked with the Office of the Mayor of Minneapolis as Community Outreach Liaison. His work included advising on community initiatives that require partnership and collaboration,

making Somali Cultural Awareness presentations to police officers and working closely with City Council Members.

Board, to 6

## Working together. Growing together.

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### Focus: AccessAbility-Gyrus Medical

Developing successful business partnerships is vital in providing training and work opportunities for adults with barriers to employment.

Opportunities for job placement in the community and the development of training and work experience programs at AccessAbility stem from these partnerships. AccessAbility's partnership with Gyrus Medical, Inc., a leading supplier of medical devices for surgical applications located in Maple Grove, Minnesota, is a good example of this success. The initial relationship with Gyrus Medical was established through the placement of an individual from our Welfare to Work program in a position at their production facility.

Alex, a Laotian refugee, is a program participant hired by Gyrus Medical. He came to AccessAbility, Inc. in 1999 with little to no work history and difficulty with English. Alex began working in AccessAbility's production facility to gain work experience and polish his skills in order to obtain job placement in the community. In May of 2000, he began working as a medical assembler at Gyrus Medical. He received job coaching and hands-on production training at Gyrus Medical, translation/interpretation services, and ongoing site follow-up visits from AccessAbility's Case Manager. Alex has increased his skills and wages significantly and will celebrate his second anniversary on the job this spring.

While providing support to Alex and his employer, we learned of other

ways that the business needs of Gyrus Medical and the training and work experience needs of AccessAbility's program participants could be matched. Now participants in the Welfare to Work and Extended Employment programs are gaining valuable work skills by performing sub-assembly for various medical devices for Gyrus Medical at our production facility.

Gyrus Medical and AccessAbility have worked together closely to implement quality processes.

Participants are gaining valuable skills in technical assembly, performance testing, process monitoring, final inspection and blueprint reading. The work requires fine, manual dexterity and attention to detail. Due to Gyrus Medical's deep concern for patient safety, improved healing, product ease and performance, participants working on these devices are gaining an understanding of the high quality and reliability requirements of the medical device industry.

AccessAbility, Inc.'s goal is to build successful partnerships that lead to opportunities for us to provide quality services for customers, for individuals to gain valuable work skills, and for community businesses to access our workforce. Gyrus Medical is a great example of such a partnership. We appreciate the opportunities created and look forward to a long-term relationship.

#### Technology, from 1

and administrative support positions for economically disadvantaged adults, including MFIP recipients.

The goal of this project is to prepare individuals to successfully enter well paying, entry level, technology related jobs including customer service, data entry, call center, receptionist and other administrative positions that require a technology focus.

AccessAbility's partners include Prostaff, U.S. Bank, Manpower, and a number of other business partners.



TechReach graduates

### Document Processing Report Card

Document Processing, one of the business services offered by AccessAbility, Inc., provides work opportunities for individuals with disabilities in two of our main program areas: Day Training and Habilitation (DTH) and Extended Employment. Program participants are engaged in data entry, scanning, CD-ROM conversion and document preparation activities.

The report card on the growth of this business is encouraging. Armed with adaptive technology to assist them, individuals with disabilities are participating in work opportunities in this higher technology approach to employment. It has even been instrumental in launching the new TechAbility program in DTH which incorporates document preparation and data entry work opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Our 2002 report card shows significant improvement over 2001:

- \* 60% increase in sales
- \* 366% increase in participants
- \* 210% increase in hours worked
- \* 33% increase in customers

In the fall of 2002, the document processing business, including document destruction, was placed on the Federal government's General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Supply Schedule. Government purchasing employees will be able to include AccessAbility in the bidding process for government contract work. AAI's document processing services will now be more visible and more easily accessed by government purchasing employees.

## Working together. Growing together.

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# Horticulture Program Expansion

Thanks to the generosity of donors, community businesses and volunteers, consumers in AccessAbility, Inc. programs now have the opportunity to garden all year round.

Our Horticulture program, which started in 2001 with a series of flower and vegetable gardens on the grounds of the facility and raised garden beds built by volunteers, expanded last fall with the construction of a 15x21 ft. heated greenhouse and an 11x16 ft. water garden and fountain.

Research has shown that horticultural activities benefit individuals with disabilities by promoting social development, psychological well-being and physical rehabilitation. According to the American Horticultural Therapy Association, horticultural therapy has proven to be beneficial for people who are physically disabled, mentally ill, developmentally disabled, elderly, substance abuser, terminally ill and socially disadvantaged.

"We continue to see only positive results from horticultural therapy for the

consumers," says Program Supervisor, Bonnie Pautsch-Dyakin. She went on to say, "Consumers in our Green Thumb Club can't wait to get back to gardening. In fact, being involved in gardening has helped to bring about a complete behavior change in some people. The greenhouse and beautiful water garden and fountain couldn't have come at a better time. We are really excited and are looking forward to possibly offering a whole new array of services to consumers and seniors. We are going to need the help of volunteers so if anyone's interested, please call."

The Green Thumb Club is keeping busy while patiently awaiting program planning, the greenhouse layout and the materials needed to start using the space. Their calendar includes for the next couple of months gardening discussions, ordering seeds, building grow lights, planting, cutting plants, and a whole lot more. In addition to preparation activities, the consumers hope to have a plant sale sometime in the spring. AccessAbility staff have already donated several plants to the program but there is still a need for more.



Chad and Justin working in the new greenhouse

AccessAbility, Inc. would like to acknowledge the following for providing gifts and services to make our Horticulture program expansion possible: The Douglas J. Schwartz Living Foundation, Rosemary Duffy Trust, The Patch Foundation, Gannett Foundation-KARE11, E.M. Pearson Foundation, Hedberg Aggregates & Aquascape Designs, Inc., Linder's Greenhouse & Nursery, Greystone Masonry, Inc., Bollig & Sons, Inc., and Wayne Dvorak.

## October 2002 "Accessing Community Ability" Event

In honor of Disability Awareness Month, AccessAbility, Inc. hosted an open house event on October 3, 2002. The event, "Accessing Community Ability," brought together families, neighbors, local businesses and representatives of the public sector for an afternoon of fun and education. The goal of this celebratory event was to raise awareness about AccessAbility and its mission in the community.

The event gave guests an opportunity to take a tour of learning centers throughout the facility to learn more about the programs and services offered here. A sampling of cross-cultural foods, entertainment, and a raffle were provided for the enjoyment of all. Entertainment included the Haylor

Bibimma Dance Theater, a west African traditional and contemporary drum and dance troop, and "Carnival of Sorts," a local acoustic rock band.

Guest speakers for the event were Cheri Blood and Susan Maus. Susan Maus, a lead business analyst for Fairview, has quadriplegia as a result of a car accident. She spoke about the importance of work for all people including those with disabilities. Cheri Blood is a cancer survivor and the wife of Michael Blood, the Edina police officer critically wounded by gunfire. Cheri shared their story of perseverance in her speech.

AccessAbility, Inc. also took the opportunity to share with the community

the expansion of the Horticulture Program including a pond and greenhouse. The new greenhouse was dedicated in the name of the late Douglas J. Schwartz and in loving memory of Rosemary and Charles Duffy. Many guests at the event remarked that they didn't realize that AccessAbility offered so many diverse programs and services.

We would like to thank our sponsors: Masco Contracting Services East-Environments for Living, Tillges Certified Orthotic Prosthetic, Inc., Reliable Medical, and Handi Medical. We also extend our thanks to all the other individuals and companies that donated services or made in-kind donations.



## Friends Together Gives Back to the Community

On December 6, 2002, Friends Together consumers braved the cold, windy weather and rang the bell for the Salvation Army. This was a great volunteer experience for consumers and staff. Consumers enjoyed greeting patrons and wishing them happy holidays when they placed their money in the kettle. Our efforts paid off after four hours of ringing, we collected a grand total of \$297.58, which made it even more worthwhile.

In addition to volunteering for the Salvation Army, Friends consumers have also been giving back to the community by volunteering at PRISM, a local food shelf. Consumers go to the food shelf twice a week and volunteer their time to help stock the food shelf and maintain an on-site thrift store.

These volunteer opportunities have been a great addition to the Friends Together program and we are looking forward to exploring new opportunities in the 2003!

### Employee, from 1

Step Into Work Supervisor. She was also instrumental in the launching of our newest DTH program component, TechAbility, which has given consumers the opportunity for higher technology work in document processing as well as data entry. Jennifer serves on the Safety & Health committee and recently was instrumental in the development of the Wellness Team to increase staff awareness of health.

When asked what she enjoys most about her job, Jennifer said "I like the variety. There are always different jobs and new opportunities. And the forty-seven consumers in my program make sure every day is different!" Jennifer is

always willing to go the extra mile and does so with endless energy and a smile. One ballot stated, "Jen is an excellent supervisor, always willing to help out wherever needed". Another said "She truly represents the mission of AccessAbility and faces any challenges with a positive attitude."

Congratulations to Jennifer on her commitment to AccessAbility and dedication that make us all succeed as a team.

**Working together.  
Growing together.**



## Doug Anderson is AccessAbility's New Controller

AccessAbility is happy to welcome Doug Anderson as its Controller. Doug brings over 26 years of experience as a Chief Financial Officer in the home health care industry, 18 of those years in the non-profit area. Doug is also one of the founders of the Non-Profit Financial Group, a professional organization for financial executives and staff in the non-profit area. He has developed and implemented cost accounting systems for tracking monthly costs for two different non-profit corporations, allowing for better control of costs and more effective delivery of services. Doug holds a degree in Business Administration-Accounting and Business Law from the Minnesota School of Business.

Doug is excited to be back in the non-profit business arena. Doug says, "AccessAbility is a fantastic place to be to help others maximize their potential in the workforce." His goals for AAI are to maintain its financial strength while positioning the organization as the industry leader.

# Working together. Growing together.

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The AccessAbility Update is a publication of AccessAbility, Inc. 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. As a result of our training and programs, we serve over 500 participants at individual work sites, in work crews at business sites, and in our building.

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

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**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.**

## Board of Directors

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### Paul Harry

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### Mohamed Jibrell

*Goodwill-Easter Seals*

### Board, from 2


He has extensive experience in Human Resources serving most recently as Manager of Technical Recruitment with FDC, Inc from 1998-2001. Prior to moving to the Twin Cities, he served as an International Development consultant with USAID. Jibrell's civic and volunteer background includes service as a board member of the Confederation of Somali Communities of MN and East Side Neighborhood Service, Inc., and as a campaign volunteer for a City of Minneapolis mayoral election candidate.

"I am looking forward to my Board service with AccessAbility, Inc. I hope to share my expertise in the areas of employee relations, diversity management, conflict resolution and community outreach," Jibrell stated.

### TechAbility, from 1

a practice keyboarding and data entry program, she has become very accomplished in a short period of time. When asked what she likes best about her job, Theresa said, "I like the people I work with. And I really like working on the computer!" Another consumer, Steven, has also really flourished in TechAbility. He is proud of the work he does and looks forward to coming to work each day.

We are proud of the accomplishments of Theresa, Steve and all of the other individuals working in the TechAbility program.

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