



AccessAbility, Inc. Receives Local and National Support to Enhance Its Horticultural Therapy Program

MINNEAPOLIS – September 20, 2002 – AccessAbility, Inc. announced today it has received gifts from several organizations to support the expansion of its horticultural therapy program. The program enhancements will include the construction of a 15-by-21-foot heated green house, additional outdoor gardens and an 11-by-16-foot water garden and fountain.

AccessAbility is a non-profit rehabilitation agency and production facility, providing work and community involvement opportunities for adults with employment barriers, such as those with disabilities, new immigrants and Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) recipients. The agency began implementing horticultural therapy in 2001 to enhance its Day Training and Habilitation services. The program soon expanded to include a weekly Green Thumb Club which includes classroom learning, field trips to area nature centers and nurseries, seed starting, outside planting, garden maintenance, picking and eating produce, and canning projects.

“It’s a rare opportunity for most of our consumers to bring about life, nurture it to maturity and reap the rewards for that achievement,” said Pam Sunder, AccessAbility Day Training and Habilitation program manager. “The ability to enhance our horticultural therapy program allows us to continue through the winter and reinforce that a disability need not be a barrier to enjoying the benefits that gardening can hold.”

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 abusers, terminally ill and socially disadvantaged.

“The benefits of our horticultural therapy program have been very apparent in the past year,” said Barbara Arnold, president of AccessAbility, Inc. “We can literally see the recreational and physical benefits our consumers are experiencing through the smiles on their faces, their happy and relaxed attitudes, an increase in social involvement and physical activity, and through improved motor skills.”

AccessAbility’s program expansion plans will begin with the installation of the water garden by local landscaping supply firm, Hedberg Aggregates on Monday, September 23. Next steps include building an indoor, heated greenhouse at the organization’s production facility and headquarters in Minneapolis. The greenhouse will be wheelchair accessible and fitted with raised beds and potting tables. The structure is expected to be completed by early October 2002. AccessAbility will also purchase gardening tools for participants with special needs.

The enhancement projects are possible through monetary grants from the Rosemary Duffy Trust, the Patch Foundation and the Douglas J. Schwartz Living Foundation. Materials, labor and design of the water garden are being donated by Hedberg Aggregates as part of its water garden training program. Linder’s Greenhouses and Nursery is donating landscape materials to beautify the area surrounding the pond during the fall season.

AccessAbility, Inc. is a nonprofit rehabilitation agency and production/training facility that provides self-sufficiency opportunities for adults with employment barriers. The agency’s consumers include people with cognitive and physical disabilities, new immigrants, and individuals transitioning from welfare to work. AccessAbility provides an array of recreational and leisure programs to impact more aspects of the lives of individuals served and to promote community inclusion. For more information about AccessAbility, Inc., visit them on the web at www.accessability.org.

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