

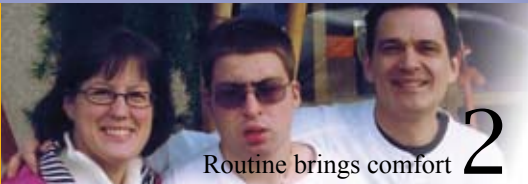
Opportunities

News and ideas for clients, friends and supporters of Opportunity Partners

Q&A

Vocational Services with Dan Meyers

2



Routine brings comfort

2



Talent showcase

3



Spaghetti dinner coming March 3

4

Sweet opportunity

Candy packaging boosts dry foods business

While Opportunity Partners workers busily weigh and package candies ranging from triple-dipped chocolate malt balls to sugar-sanded candy fruit slices, Lunds and Byerly's prepare to sell the confections at its 20-plus grocery stores throughout the Twin Cities.

The venture is part of an exciting launch into dry food packaging that Opportunity Partners began almost two years ago. The endeavor has resulted in new business for the organization and interesting projects for workers who delight in working "the candy line."

"I like working as a team and learning to be a team player," said Dayna Brown, adding that she has a new appreciation for packaged products she sees at the stores. "When I go to the store, I always used to wonder how the process works," she said. "It's interesting, and it makes me feel happy."

The project with Lunds and Byerly's launched in summer 2010, but Opportunity Partners began researching and preparing in 2008 to secure a share of the Twin Cities' dry food packaging business. Its bulk-to-retail operations prepare products like candy, pasta and snack bars for retail distribution.

To handle dry food, Opportunity Partners is licensed with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and complies with Food and Drug Administration standards. Workers must be specially trained to work on a food line and must wear protective clothing like hair nets and gloves.

For the Lunds and Byerly's candy program, Opportunity Partners works with Lunds and Byerly's on the sourcing of the candy, then packages the confections for sale at Lunds and Byerly's. The organization expects to package more than 100,000 tubs of candy for Lunds and Byerly's the first year. In all, there are about 35 regular varieties of candies, plus holiday seasonal items.

"It has been a pleasure to work on our candy program with Opportunity Partners," said Julie Griffin, Director of Private Label for Lunds and Byerly's. "Their values of service in educating and helping their clients match up with our values of service to our employees and customers," she added. "It's nice to work with another local company dedicated to helping others achieve improved life experiences. The attention to detail and quality of the work from Opportunity Partners is grand."



Dayna Brown displays an assortment of candy she helped package at Opportunity Partners.

Lund Food Holdings, Inc., owns and operates 10 Lunds and 11 Byerly's supermarkets in the Twin Cities and surrounding area.

To promote its partnership with Lunds and Byerly's, Opportunity Partners took part in "Meet the Maker," Richfield Lunds' holiday display of locally produced/packaged foods.

Through the lens of brain injury

Healing with the help of photography

A vicious assault more than 30 years ago left Pam Broten near death. In a coma for months, her broken body began to heal. But a brain injury from the attack left her forever changed.

In time, she found the greatest medicine to be her photography.

Pam, 58, is a participant in Opportunity Partners' brain injury program, TBI Metro Services. Through the program, Pam learns to compensate for effects of the brain injury – memory problems, lack of concentration, confusion and balance issues.

Staff member Becky Zamora guides Pam in areas of independent living, like staying organized and mastering everyday issues made more complicated by the brain injury. She also helped Pam, who has always loved photography, to access photo supplies through Opportunity Partners' client assistance fund.

"Becky's been a godsend," Pam said. "She helps me stay focused."

Pam began taking photos as a child in Germany, where her family lived while her dad was stationed in the military. Photography was a hobby that allowed Pam to blend her love of animals and plants.



Pam Broten stands near her photo of roses on display at a Minneapolis coffee shop.

Today, Pam's goals are to display her photos in a local coffee shop and to make money as a photographer. That goal got a step closer when Pam was invited to showcase 25 photos at Overflow Espresso Café in Minneapolis.

By the time shop owner Jeff Barnhart said yes, Pam had only 10 days to print photos and purchase

frames. "She was absolutely thrilled to have the opportunity," Jeff said.

"It took forever to believe in myself," Pam said. "This is the first time I met a goal and jumped ahead."

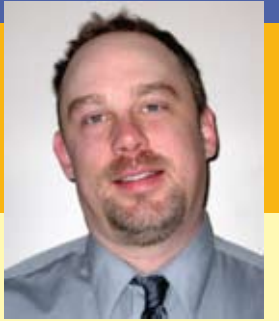
A St. Paul resident, Pam rarely leaves home without her camera. She takes thousands of photos a year, earning prizes in several photography contests.

"I don't even let the dogs out without my camera," she said, adding that she especially loves to photograph gardens. "I try to bring my garden to life," she said. "I'll chase a dragonfly through the yard until it stops."

Pam is now paying it forward, mentoring a 14-year-old family friend who wants to learn photography. "It's really rewarding to help another person accomplish their goals," she said. "To have someone ask me for help feels really good."

Q & A Employment pathways

Dan Meyers,
Assistant Director of
Vocational Services



Dan Meyers sat down recently to discuss Opportunity Partners' vocational services and new opportunities for the community to get involved.

Q. How does Opportunity Partners advance people's careers?

A. Our Vocational Services Department specializes in getting people with disabilities to work. Our professional job evaluators, job developers and job coaches help people evaluate their job skills, and find and retain jobs. In 2010, we had nearly 100 community job placements, double our 2009 numbers. We also have a Supported Self-Employment Coordinator to aid individuals who have an entrepreneurial spirit to start their own business.

Q. What types of disabilities do your clients have?

A. We always look at ability before disability, and many of our clients have hidden disabilities and may choose not to disclose their disability to an employer. We work with a wide range of people and abilities. Their disabilities may include developmental disabilities, mental illness such as depression or post traumatic stress disorder, brain injury from accidents or stroke, physical disabilities, speech impairments, conditions like epilepsy or cerebral palsy, even things like diabetes or heart conditions. Whatever the disability, we can try to help.

Q. How do evaluation sites work?

A. We are seeking businesses to serve as evaluation sites. We provide a worker and pay them for their time; you simply need to provide work and feedback. It's a great opportunity to get the community involved in our cause and help someone with a disability improve their work skills. Plus, you are getting free labor since we pay the worker for their time.

Q. How else can the community get involved with Opportunity Partners?

A. We are always looking for businesses to partner with and aid us in our mission of employment for people with disabilities. Businesses can call us when they have job openings as we may have a candidate. We can also provide contracted work teams or bring work to our center-based facilities. You can also come take a tour, volunteer, make a donation, or invite us to speak at your service club. There are countless ways to get involved.

Q. I'm told you have a new volunteer opportunity for business people.

A. We have a newly formed Business Partner Council – a group of business owners, human resource professionals, and other business leaders who are partnering with us. Participants provide strategic advice and consultation on employment topics and issues affecting people with disabilities. Partners also provide leads for jobs for our clients with disabilities – independent jobs, contracted teams or production work for our center-based operations. All of these options provide job opportunities for people with disabilities.

Q. How does a business benefit from being a part of the council?

A. Join our Business Partner Council and you'll benefit by getting free training on disability topics, assistance in diversifying your workforce, networking opportunities, positive public relations, and recognition opportunities for you and your company. We meet every other month for an hour and a half.

For more information on the Business Partner Council and other ways to join Opportunity Partners' cause, contact Dan Meyers at 952-930-4242 or dmeyers@opportunities.org.

Family Focus

Routine brings comfort

Routine provides valuable structure, especially when unanticipated events happen. That was what June Kuntze found after her husband, Bob, died suddenly in September when he was hit by a car while riding his scooter.

Bob and June's son, Ryan, had just started Opportunity Partners' day program a few months earlier. In the midst of such grief, it was reassuring

for June to have Opportunity Partners as a place for Ryan. "Ryan loves routine," she said. "His grief was different than mine. He is very black and white. For him, he needed the routine he was used to."

While June struggles with the loss of her husband, she must carry on for Ryan. The couple's only child was born with WAGR Syndrome, a rare disorder that can result in a range of developmental and physical disabilities. Ryan, 22, began attending Opportunity Partners in June 2010 after graduating from the Edina Public Schools' transition program at South Education Center.

June said the family toured five or six organizations to find a good fit for Ryan. "At first, I was a little intimidated by the size of Opportunity Partners, but it affords a lot of opportunities," she said.

Now Ryan spends time at Opportunity Partners Monday through Friday, working and taking classes like bowling.

"It was the easiest transition," June said. "Ryan loves work, and when we first toured Opportunity Partners, Ryan loved the work floor. He was enthralled."

June, Ryan and Bob Kuntze pictured during happier days. Bob died suddenly in a scooter accident in September, resulting in many life changes for June and Ryan.



Sharing joy through volunteerism

Giving back as a volunteer comes naturally to Opportunity Partners' Valley resident David Spragg, who adds value to his community in many ways. In the last year, David packed rice at Feed My Starving Children, bagged groceries for the homeless at Union Gospel Mission, and created crafts with kids at Gillette Children's Hospital.

"I am thankful for all I have and I give with a joyful heart," David said.

David and his friend Frank Ward volunteer regularly with the support of Program Manager Kurt Larson. "I get a lot out of it and I know the residents do too," Kurt said. "The impact this has had on the other volunteers and the people who come in to receive food is immense."

David Spragg smiles as he prepares grocery bags for food for the homeless at Union Gospel Mission.



Staff member earns state employment award



Congratulations to Ross Pringle, Opportunity Partners Job Developer, for being named 2010 Placement Person of the Year from Job Placement and Development Division

(JPD) of the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association. Ross was praised for placing 18 individuals in independent community jobs in his first year, exhibiting excellent communication and follow-through, and sharing his expertise in association activities.

Opportunity Partners showcases talents

Creative outlets for expression



"Winter Fun" by Kim Berry



"Grove of Trees" by Allan Benson



"The Bear" by Maureen O'Keefe

If I Could Fly

*If I could fly
I'd be able to reach the sky
I'd fly so high time gets me by
So, if I go,
My last words would be goodbye
But when I fly at your side,
I'll stop and say hi.*

Poem by Asha Duncan



"Winter Fun," featured on Opportunity Partners' 2010 holiday card, was created by **Kim Berry**, an artist with a disability who participated in Opportunity Partners' Supported Self-Employment program and launched her business in summer 2010. Kim is a member of West End Arts and will have her work displayed at the Kramer Gallery at Kenwood Senior Living Center this winter. With her background in art education, Kim would also like to teach art to adults. According to Kim, "Art has been my survival. Art is my first language." Kim's artwork can be seen at <http://www.coroflot.com/kimberry>.



Allan Benson has displayed his artwork throughout the Twin Cities, including the Sister Kenny International art show where he placed second in 2009. He works with a mentor who has helped him launch his business selling his art on the internet. "I am inspired by living plants, the shapes of the land and architecture," Allan states. "I experiment and play with perspective and dimension on the canvas and then fill it up with paint. I use color and black outline to make the shapes pop out and appear more realistic. I like to let my creativity run wild." Check out Allan's work at <http://www.allanbenson.blogspot.com/>.



Maureen O'Keefe, a participant in Opportunity Partners programs, uses art to share her connection with nature and her views on current events. "Creating art allows me to express my love and compassion for others and the world in which we all live," Maureen noted. "I am able to share my feelings about what is happening in the news. I wish for all people and animals to live in a world of equality and joy." View Maureen's work at <http://www.sassyspeaksmo.blogspot.com>.



Asha Duncan, who attends Opportunity Partners' Asplin Center, enjoys writing poetry with the assistance of her instructor Dianna Hamilton. Asha, who is blind, wrote this poem about a butterfly, adding she likes butterflies because they are delicate and she once touched a butterfly on the ground.

DONOR FOCUS

Leaving a legacy

Pajor Family Foundation extends support

Opportunity Partners thanks the Pajor Family Foundation, generous contributors to both the annual fund and *Building Opportunities for Life* Capital Campaign since 2007.

Mickey Pajor said she and her husband, Bob, started the foundation because they wanted to give back to the community. "We also wanted to leave a legacy of giving to our children and grandchildren," said Mickey, who serves on the Opportunity Partners Board of Directors.

The Pajor Family Foundation's charitable interests have generally been children, families in need and education. Although Opportunity Partners does not fall into the foundation's usual giving focus, the Pajors feel strongly about Opportunity Partners' mission and success in serving people with disabilities.

"It is both amazing and beautiful to see clients become productive, proud and independent assets to our community," Mickey added. "Opportunity Partners does a wonderful job providing clients with the training and support they need to go out on their own and demonstrate their abilities and enthusiasm. We are proud to support Opportunity Partners through our foundation, to help carry on the important work they do."



Matt Gotham and Mickey Pajor at Opportunity Partners' annual gala.

Karlins Center receives generous matching challenge grant

The holidays came early for Opportunity Partners' Karlins Center. The program, which serves adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other similar disabilities, received \$20,000 in donations for health/wellness equipment and new technology like laptop computers and iPads.

The \$20,000 in donations included a \$10,000 challenge grant from anonymous donors. Opportunity Partners successfully raised the other \$10,000 to receive the matching challenge.

For more information on Karlins Center, check out www.OpportunityPartners.org.



**Thank you to everyone
for our successful Capital Campaign!**

Opportunity Partners launches new Web site



Check out www.OpportunityPartners.org. The revamped site includes the latest information easily categorized for all audiences, including individuals and families, businesses and people making program referrals. Events, news and opportunities to “join the cause” are all easily accessible.

Opportunity Partners is on Facebook!



Join our online community to learn about events, read disability-related articles and more. Show your support by going to the Facebook link on the Opportunity Partners Web site at www.OpportunityPartners.org.



Thanksgiving preview

Vicky and Doug Neitzel enjoy turkey with all the trimmings at the annual Hennepin residential Thanksgiving dinner. The event, held the week before Thanksgiving at the Uptown Diner, drew more than 100 people.

The Old Log Theater invites you to
On Golden Pond

**Service Club Night at the Old Log Theater
benefiting Opportunity Partners**

Thursday, February 24
8 p.m. Curtain

Ticket price: \$37 – includes show only.

A portion of your ticket price will be donated to Opportunity Partners and local service clubs. Purchase tickets through the Hopkins Lions Club at 952-567-2574 or at Opportunity Partners, 952-930-4208 or events@opportunities.org. Add dinner to your ticket by contacting Joe Pint at joe@oldlog.com, 952-474-5951. The Old Log Theater is a short drive from the Minneapolis area near Lake Minnetonka.



Here comes the pasta

Event to be held March 3

Join us at the annual **Hopkins Noontime Lions' spaghetti dinner** on Thursday, March 3 at Opportunity Partners' Koch Technical & Training Campus.

Spaghetti with meatballs or meatless sauce, salad, bread and beverages will be served from 4-7 p.m. at the Koch Campus, 5500 Opportunity Court, Minnetonka.

Tickets, which are sold at the door, are \$7 for adults, \$4 for children under 12, and \$30 for families of five or more and group homes. To go orders are also available.

For more information, email events@opportunities.org or call 952-912-2494. Come show your support for this tasty fundraiser.

Address or name changes.
Do we have your name and address correct? Would you prefer to be removed from this mailing list? Kindly contact us at info@opportunities.org or call 952-912-2494. Please include information exactly as it appears on your mailing label. Thank you!

The printing of this newsletter has been generously donated.
Opportunity Partners is an EEO/AA employer.

Editor
Julie Peters
Design
Craig Munson

Published in the interest of families, friends and supporters of Opportunity Partners, Inc. This newsletter is available in alternative formats by request to the Advancement Department at 952-938-5511.

Newsletter
Volume 38 • Issue 1 • Winter 2011
tel 952-938-5511
fax 952-930-4279
ty 952-930-4293
www.OpportunityPartners.org

Opportunities

5500 Opportunity Court • Minnetonka, MN 55343
ABILITY REDEFINED
Opportunity Partners

Nonprofit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Permit no. 448
Hopkins, MN