

Opportunities

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

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Opportunity Partners expands in east Metro

Launches community-based autism program By Sarah Dighans

On September 15, the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce joined Opportunity Partners in an open house and ribbon-cutting ceremony, officially expanding Opportunity Partners' brain injury services and launching its West St. Paul autism program.

While many companies and organizations may be identified with one of the Twin Cities, over the years Opportunity Partners has successfully made the bridge between Minneapolis and St. Paul. The relocation of the West St. Paul TBI Metro Services office has provided the space for more people with brain injuries to receive services. The new location also enables further program growth opportunities.

Tom Blaschka, a TBI participant, said, "TBI Metro Services has helped me get back into the workforce, which allowed me to gain independence in many areas of my life."

In addition to the TBI Metro Services office, the new location marks the start of Spectrum, a community-based program for people with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), as well as other disabilities.

"I came to Opportunity Partners because I wanted to get help to find a job in the community. I am now working three days a week at a community job," said Joey, a Spectrum participant.

Spectrum is proving to be extremely popular, as enrollment is already exceeding initial expectations. *See related story on page 3.*

Ribbon-cutting ceremony at Opportunity Partners' new West St. Paul office.

Sarah is a Marketing/Communications intern.



Students get set for retail careers

Training collaboration opens doors

Zach McDonald, 21, offered a quick reply when asked about the next steps in his path toward a retail career: "I'm ready," he said.

Classmate Justin Fleming, 20, chimed in: "We have the skills and talents."

Both Zach and Justin are recent graduates of the founding GetSet! for Work class, piloted by Opportunity Partners, The Arc Greater Twin Cities and Dunwoody College of Technology. They completed a five-week training program at Arc's Value Village Thrift Store & Donation Center in St. Paul, finishing not only with certificates but a lot of pride and hope, too.

"My whole family's happy for me," added Zach, noting he recently appeared on the cover of the Arc newsletter. "It's the beginning of something new."

Like Zach, Justin looks forward to a bright future. "I'd like to stay in the retail industry where I feel comfortable," he said, adding he has enjoyed the training. "It's been helpful. I've learned to use the touch screen cash register, pricing gun and pallet jack, and I've learned how to give better customer service."

Opportunity Partners' Training Instructor, Carol Glazer, is proud of the students' efforts. In addition to Zach and Justin, students Jermel Smith and Mary Kate Davini also received certificates. "We have a wealth of experience here," Carol said. "They've worked really hard."

The program represents a creative, new training collaboration to boost job opportunities and greater independence for people with disabilities. Designed



Students join instructor Carol Glazer in showing off their training certificates at Arc Value Village in St. Paul. They are graduates of a retail training program offered by Opportunity Partners, The Arc Greater Twin Cities and Dunwoody College of Technology.

around existing jobs and employer needs, the training was developed into course curriculum by Dunwoody's Custom Training & Continuing Education department before being adapted by Opportunity Partners for students with disabilities.

Arc's Value Village Thrift Store & Donation Center served as the training site, providing a real-life taste of the retail business. The students who completed the pilot earned a joint certificate from Opportunity Partners and Dunwoody College.

"Students who complete the program will have the skills to get competitive jobs at market wages," said Marianne Reich, Chief Program Officer at The Arc Greater Twin Cities. "We're raising the bar on employment of people with disabilities."

Enrollees earned \$7.25 per hour during the training. The pilot covered three levels of retail associate training and on-the-job work experience. Opportunity Partners and The Arc Greater Twin

Cities raised funds through donations and grants to cover the cost of the pilot.

This is the second certified educational track in which Opportunity Partners has collaborated with Dunwoody College. The first program, professional cleaning, was launched in 2010. Opportunity Partners plans to pilot two new platforms, Office Assistant and Computer Networking/Service, in 2012. Plans are also underway to expand retail training in the future.

Q&A End-of-the-year giving

An interview with Sue Hayes,
Vice President of Development



The spirit of giving and the sense of gratitude are themes that resonate with our donors. At Opportunity Partners, we are grateful that our families and friends express their gratitude with gifts that support the mission and the programs for the people we serve. Understanding that this year has challenged us all, we rely on your generosity to support the programs and services we provide. We count on the gifts we receive at year-end to reach the annual goal of close to \$1 million. The following questions may help you decide how to make your gift.

Is there anything about end-of-the-year giving donors need to know?

Yes! If you want your gift to count toward the 2011 season, it must have a post mark and/or processing date no later than December 31, 2011.

Will Opportunity Partners be taking part in "Give to the Max" Day?

"Give to the Max" Day is an annual event for Opportunity Partners and we are thrilled to announce a \$10,000 matching challenge (see story on page 3). Go to www.givemn.org/opportunitypartners to give a gift on November 16. We will be emailing more information as it gets closer to the date.

If my company has a "match" program, how should I let you know?

In order for us to receive a match, you will need to get the proper forms from your company and fill them out. Then, fax, email or mail them to Opportunity Partners and, voila! Thank you for your match!

Can I give to a specific program of my choice?

Yes, a donor can always decide to give a gift to a particular program or site.

What different giving options are there?

You can give via check, credit card, stock and/or cash. If giving via check, please send your check by mail to 5500 Opportunity Court, Minnetonka, MN 55343.

If giving via credit card, we accept Visa, MasterCard and/or American Express. You can donate directly on our website by going to <http://opportunities.org/take-action/donate/> and clicking on "Donate Online." You can also print the online "Giving Form" found via the same website. If using the "Giving Form," please fill it out and mail it to the address above.

We are also more than happy to take credit card gifts via phone between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Call 952-930-4286 and we'd be delighted to help you. If giving stock, please call for more information.

Another great way to give is by sponsoring and/or attending one of our special events. We have a variety of ways to give, just pick the one that is easiest for you!

How can people get more information about giving opportunities?

We welcome all inquiries. Please feel free to contact us at 952-930-4286 or giving@opportunities.org.

Thank you so much for making a gift to support Opportunity Partners. We and the people we serve are very grateful.

Family Focus

Son excels at Plymouth Asplin Center

Pat and Jane Salden of Mound find great comfort in knowing son Tim, 40, is happy and enjoying his passions like nature and working a physical job.

"If he's happy, we're all happy," said Jane.

Tim has attended Opportunity Partners-Asplin Center in Plymouth since 1993 and excels at his classes and jobs that meet his desire to be busy and physically active. He currently works at a nearby warehouse where he sweeps and cleans.

He is also an active volunteer at Asplin Center and especially enjoys volunteering regularly at Westwood Hills Nature Center where he fills bird feeders and pulls buckthorn.

Tim, who is nonverbal, communicates with staff and family primarily through sign language and gesturing.

"This morning he motioned to me and

signed 'pretty tree' as we drove by a maple that was turning orange and red," Pat said. "He notices things like that in nature."

Tim also utilizes an augmentative speech device to communicate, and he practices using the device in Asplin's "Can We Talk" class.

Work is another important part of Tim's life. "He'll talk about a job, he shares his excitement with us," Pat said. "We know he's really happy when he shows us his paycheck."

The Saldens said they would recommend Opportunity Partners to other families.

"We're pleased with what Opportunity Partners provides," Jane said. "Tim's active in the community and he likes that. We can be out shopping and he knows a lot of people that he's connected with at various stores or outings."



Tim, Jane and Pat Salden are pleased to be a part of Opportunity Partners' Asplin Center family.



Painting for a cause

Mike Fandel of MEDRAD Interventional joined a dozen co-workers in mid-September to spruce up one of Opportunity Partners' 20 residences with a fresh coat of paint.

"Our company promotes community stewardship and encourages us to take a day off to help the community," Mike said. "On a personal level, I really enjoy the chance to pick a project where I can be outside and where I really feel like I accomplish something."

Mike has taken part in volunteer activities at Opportunity Partners for several years. "It's always a good time," he said.

To learn about how your company can volunteer at Opportunity Partners, call 952-930-4209 or e-mail volunteer@opportunities.org



Rachel Cortez wears a new smock to package candy.

Going green, saving green

The lease of 1,500 smocks from UniFirst for staff, clients and temporary workers who package food is saving Opportunity Partners about \$2,000 per month, while promoting a "greener" workspace. The reusable smocks, which UniFirst picks up, launders and returns each week, will keep landfills free of the 4,800 disposable plastic aprons and 3,000 sleeve protectors Opportunity Partners was using each month. UniFirst is also providing hairnets and gloves. An added bonus: UniFirst embroidered the Opportunity Partners logo on the smocks, which is building the organization's brand among workers and visitors.

PEOPLE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Brewing up support for Opportunity Partners' mission By Sarah Dighans

Opportunity Partners' mission was shared with 80 new people at an August 11 event at Summit Brewing Company.

Happy Hour at Summit Brewery was an opportunity for families, siblings and staff of Opportunity Partners to interact at a young, fresh and fun event. Throughout the night, individuals mingled, enjoyed food and drinks, and heard from Nate Dahmer, whose brother Neal attends Opportunity Partners.

Nate shared his personal connection to Opportunity Partners. He recalled how Neal was very involved in high school activities, but how quickly those opportunities changed as Neal got older.

Then, in 2010, the Dahmer family found Opportunity Partners. Since then, Neal has been actively involved in different classes and jobs within the community.

"Opportunity Partners offers Neal everything he needs to have great opportunities once again," said Nate Dahmer. "Through Opportunity Partners, Neal once again has opportunity and a sense of self and purpose in society."

Check out photos on our Facebook page!



▲ Nate and Lindsay Dahmer believe in Opportunity Partners' mission.

▼ Staff and guests at happy hour at Summit Brewery in support of Opportunity Partners.



Create for a Cause – new event tempts tastebuds



Liz Burgard and Mya Smith at the Create event.

Opportunity Partners' September 22 Create for a Cause event was a huge success. In all, 75 guests joined Opportunity Partners for an intimate food experience at the Create Dining Studio on Jackson Street in Minneapolis. The event benefited Opportunity Partners' cause to empower people with disabilities to live, learn and work as independently as possible.

Guests enjoyed a hand-crafted menu created by local chef Philip Dorwart. The evening also featured Minneapolis' very own "Cheese Guy," Patrick Moore, demonstrating a live mozzarella pull.

Food stations included such delights as Portobello sliders on brioche buns and hand-rolled pasta featuring pork-tomato ragout. Guests also had the chance to bid on a private dinner with Opportunity Partners participant and aspiring personal chef Matt Gotham, and on a cheese and wine party with the "Cheese Guy."

Mya Smith, who has lost 200 pounds by exercising and eating right, shared her story with the audience.

"At Opportunity Partners, I take cooking classes that teach me how to make healthy meals," Mya said. "I learn to chop fruits and vegetables, use the stove and follow recipes. My favorite thing to cook is spicy chili. In my free time I like to play sports, like softball, to stay fit, too. In the future my goal is to live on my own in an apartment."

Sponsored by Mickey and Bob Pajor, the event raised more than \$20,000. A special "Fund A Need" for the evening raised dollars for Opportunity Partners' health and wellness initiatives for people served by the organization.

If you would like to join our e-mail list to learn about future events, contact events@opportunities.org

DONOR FOCUS

Give to the Max Day: The Doyles

By Sarah Dighans

"Dad, I got my paycheck today!" said **John Doyle III**.

While most people are excited to receive their paychecks, it is less common to outwardly express it. However, for John Doyle III, son of John and Colleen Doyle, that enthusiastic expression is a common occurrence.



John Doyle III

we have observed on John and his co-workers' lives. We gave through Give to the Max Day because we wanted to help Opportunity Partners potentially receive matching gifts. It was a great way to see our dollars go even further. It is very easy to give online," the Doyles said.

In June 2008, 24-year-old John joined Opportunity Partners after the family toured the Koch Campus.

"We toured many programs, and Opportunity Partners was by far the program we felt would best fit John's needs," said the Doyles.

Since then, John has been actively involved in various classes and work opportunities offered at Opportunity Partners.

John's fondness of Opportunity Partners has perpetuated a deep appreciation for Opportunity Partners' mission by the Doyles. When Give to the Max Day occurred last November, they were more than happy to take advantage of the opportunity to give.

"We chose to give to Opportunity Partners because of the immense positive impact that

✓ **November 16**
\$10,000 challenge match

Give to the Max Day is a day for people to come together to raise as much money as possible for nonprofits in 24 hours – starting at midnight on November 16 through 11:59 p.m. on November 16. Opportunity Partners is thrilled to announce a \$10,000 matching gift by the parent of a long-time Opportunity Partners participant. For every dollar Opportunity Partners receives up to \$10,000, it will be matched 100 percent! The family wishes to remain anonymous.

To give on November 16, go to www.givemn.org/opportunitypartners

giveMN.org
Click. Contribute. Change Your World.

F.R. Bigelow Foundation provides expansion, opportunity

By Sarah Dighans

Opportunity Partners recently received a \$15,000 grant from the F. R. Bigelow Foundation for the expansion of Opportunity Partners' Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) services to West St. Paul.

In July, Opportunity Partners launched its community-based ASD program in West St. Paul.

The new program, called Spectrum, will provide the necessary training and support for individuals with ASD, Asperger's Syndrome and other related disabilities to attain and retain employment in the community. *See related story on page 1.*

This center opens at a time when there is an immediate need for these services. Dakota County estimates there will be 50-75 graduating students per year who will qualify for services. Prior to the launch of Spectrum, Opportunity Partners had not offered specialized ASD services in the St. Paul area. The Karlins Center, located in Plymouth and home to Opportunity Partners' first ASD program, was typically out of reach for St. Paul area residents due to transportation challenges.

Now, thanks to the F. R. Bigelow Foundation, this expansion will allow Opportunity Partners to serve approximately 24 individuals in West St. Paul by the end of 2011 with steady growth expected into 2012.

The F. R. Bigelow Foundation was established in 1946 as a trust to promote the well-being of mankind and to support the civic, educational, religious and other needs of the community in the years to come.

QR Codes take shape at Opportunity Partners

By Sarah Dighans

Opportunity Partners took another step toward social media with the integration of QR Codes into our marketing efforts.

QR Codes, abbreviated from “Quick Response Codes,” are scannable cell phone barcodes. These barcodes link directly to a specific alphanumeric data page. This interactive approach to community and business partners will likely become a staple at Opportunity Partners as we continue our push into social media.

In order to take advantage of QR Codes, download the free QR Code app via your smartphone’s market, then scan the code above to see how it works.



Join our online community by going to the Facebook icon at www.OpportunityPartners.org

SAVE THE DATE!

FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 2012

Join us for an evening of fun to support Opportunity Partners!
Watch for more information about our annual gala.



New apartment program scores big

Opportunity Partners is seeking residents for its new community integrated apartment program. Located near Excelsior Boulevard and Blake Road in Hopkins, the program offers more independence than a traditional group home, with the safety net of regular on-site staffing. Those living here can enjoy the benefits of community life from peer support, roommates and neighbors. Contact Doug Annett for more information at 952-930-4283 or dannett@opportunities.org.

Opportunity Partners meets challenge with Nordic Ware



Scott Lundberg packages bakeware at Opportunity Partners' Bloomington facility.

CHALLENGE: Nordic Ware, a well known American manufacturer of kitchenware products like the ever-popular Bundt Pan, needed high volume, efficient hand packaging of its 4-piece baking set in time for the busy holiday season.

SOLUTION: Opportunity Partners met the challenge, adding forklifts, conveyor systems, heat tunnels and pallet-wrapping machinery to complete 247,000 baking sets on time. The job also provided quality work opportunities to people with disabilities.

Opportunity Partners began packaging Nordic Ware baking sets in July at its Bloomington facility. The job was so large that it required a fleet of 55 semi trucks to deliver the products for retail distribution. The partnership was a great success, leading to additional projects for Opportunity Partners this year and into 2012.

Founded in 1946 in Minneapolis, Nordic Ware is a family-owned company that markets an extensive line of cookware, bakeware,

microwave and barbecue products. Nordic Ware’s first products were ethnic bakeware items like the Rosette Iron, Ebleskiver Pan and Krunkake Iron. Best known for its Bundt Pan, Nordic Ware estimates there are nearly 60 million Bundt pans in kitchens across America.

“The Nordic Ware name is associated with quality, dependability and value, and we are thrilled to bring Opportunity Partners’ quality, dependability and value to a company as well-respected as Nordic Ware,” said Gregg Murray, Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing. “Our workers are extremely proud to have played a role in the packaging of nearly 250,000 baking sets, and we look forward to many more exciting projects.”

The baking sets are currently being sold at retail giants like Costco and a variety of specialty kitchen and cooking shops around the world.



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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.

tel 952-938-5511
fax 952-930-4279
ty 952-930-4293
www.OpportunityPartners.org

Volume 38 • Issue 4 • Fall 2011
Newsletter

Opportunities

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