

Opportunities

Summer 2015

YOUR OPPORTUNITY PARTNERS NEWSLETTER



Your support helped Dylan get a job in the community!

Need help finding things at Home Depot? Dylan has you covered! Dylan is in his third month as a Sales Associate and has already made quite an impact. Working with his Opportunity Partners job developer Nancy Grayson, Dylan spent 20 hours a week for two weeks memorizing the most commonly asked for items in all 53 aisles. Nancy said, "I am not exaggerating when I say that what he did was difficult by anyone's standards." When Store Manager Melissa Belford saw what Dylan could do, she hired him!

Dylan works 20 hours a week roaming around the store and asking customers if he can help them find anything. He says his favorite part about the job is "helping people find things." Using a voice app on his tablet he downloaded and programmed himself, Dylan communicates with customers and helps them find what they need. With an excellent



memory and a giant smile, Dylan is a customer service natural. Melissa says that she gets about 10 compliments about Dylan a week.

When he first started, everyone introduced themselves to Dylan and welcomed him. He even works near his own neighborhood, so he was recognized by several customers and former classmates. Dylan truly is a part of the community.



Residents of Jorgensen House return home to beautiful, new windows.

**View the video at
opportunities.org**

Renewal by Andersen donates 40 windows to OP home

In the largest donation of its kind, Renewal by Andersen installed more than 40 new, energy-efficient windows in Opportunity Partners' Jorgensen House. A crew of 15 installers worked all day on June 19 to replace the windows in the 90-year old Minneapolis house.

"This generous donation of maintenance-free windows will reduce our heating and cooling costs, beautify this historic home, and most importantly, enhance the quality of life for the individuals with disabilities who have called this their home for more than 15 years," said Opportunity Partners President & CEO Armando Camacho. "We are incredibly grateful."

**Opportunity
Partners**
ABILITY REDEFINED

Our staff shine

OP employees earn state honors



Congratulations to **David Gaarder** and **Amy Heigel** (pictured with Opportunity Partners President & CEO, Armando Camacho), who were among six honorees statewide to earn the prestigious ARRM Cares award on May 14 in Bloomington.

David, a Certified Learning Platform instructor, was recognized for his skill and leadership in training and motivating people with disabilities to succeed in professional cleaning and other careers.

Amy, a Semi-Independent Living Skills Specialist, earned honors for leading and coaching people with disabilities toward improved self-sufficiency and physical and emotional health.

Congratulations to David and Amy! We are so proud of our amazing staff!

ARRM is a nonprofit association of more than 200 providers and businesses dedicated to leading the advancement of community-based services for people with disabilities.

We love a parade!

Celebrating being a part of the community since 1953, nearly 30 Opportunity Partners staff and people served walked in the July 19 Hopkins Raspberry Festival parade. Our self-advocacy group, COAL, was among the participants. Thanks to everyone who waved to us!



Thank you Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation

Opportunity Partners has received a \$25,000 grant from the **Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation** to fund our Certified Learning Platform programs.

The training platforms include Professional Cleaning and Computer Networking & Support. Opportunity Partners also collaborates with Walgreens for retail training through its REDI program. The programs boast a 75-85 percent placement rate.

“At Opportunity Partners, our mission centers around advancing the quality of life for people with disabilities,” said Armando Camacho, President and CEO. “For many people, a major part of quality of life includes employment success, and this grant will provide more opportunities for people to grow vocationally.”



Students celebrate what they've accomplished following a Certified Learning Platform graduation.

Message from the CEO

Armando Camacho

New Mission, Vision & Values unveiled

It's a best practice for organizations to review their Mission, Vision and Values every so often to ensure they reflect the work you do and what you strive to become.

When I joined Opportunity Partners as President & CEO in January 2014, I had a difficult time memorizing our organization's Mission statement. Not that it wasn't solid and descriptive – it was; it told what we did and how – but it was 30 words long.

Our Vision and Values were also verbose and certainly in need of some polishing. The time seemed right for some serious "Mission work."

This involved talking – with employees, people we serve, families, Board members and other stakeholders – about what we do, how we do it, and why it matters. Our goal was to boil all this information down into new Mission, Vision and Values statements that, while succinct, packed a punch. This wasn't easy, especially when our organization does such important and sometimes complex work, and when wordsmithing can go on forever if you let it.

Eventually, we took the best of all of the words, gathered them together, and with the support of our Board of Directors, created new Mission, Vision and Values statements that I'm proud to share:

MISSION: Together we advance the quality of life for people with disabilities.

VISION: People of all abilities thrive in the world.

VALUES: *Impact:* Generate solutions that make a difference.

Choice: Create opportunities for people to lead self-directed lives.

Heart: Promote the dignity and worth of each other.

Partnership: Facilitate change through relationships, collaboration, and advocacy.



We don't want our Mission, Vision and Values to get parked on a shelf; rather, we want them to be living, breathing and influencing the fine work we

do each and every day. Our Mission, Vision and Values are the essence of why we exist and provide a compass as we move forward together.

I'd enjoy hearing your feedback about our new Mission, Vision and Values. Feel free to share your comments with me at acamacho@opportunities.org.

Collaborating for better health

As I just shared, one of our new values is Partnership. An example of Partnership I'm particularly excited about is that Opportunity Partners is part of the **Altair Accountable Care Organization (ACO)**, a collaboration of six nonprofit community organizations and one medical provider working together to provide high quality, coordinated care to people with disabilities.

Opportunity Partners, Hammer, Mount Olivet Rolling Acres, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, Living Well Disability Services, Lifeworks and Bluestone Physician Services make up the Altair ACO. Together, we support 6,600 people with disabilities throughout Minnesota. Altair aims to improve quality of life for people with disabilities through collaborations that improve health outcomes and lower health care costs.

Watch for more information to come about this innovative model of support!

You made a difference!

Your generosity helps us meet our mission

Nearly 330 friends of Opportunity Partners joined together for an unforgettable evening May 30 at Opportunity Partners' annual Gala. Held for the first time at the Koch Campus in Minnetonka, guests were wowed by the transformation of the production floor into a beautiful space.

In all, more than \$145,000 was raised for Opportunity Partners' programs and services.

Thank you to everyone who played a role in making this year's event so successful! To view photos and the video from the event, check out opportunities.org/gala.

Save the date for next year's Gala: May 14, 2016.

Would you like to help us plan the event?

Contact us at events@opportunities.org.



Siri and Tyler Peterson of SunLife, Beth Fahning and Mary Beth Galey from Medica, and Stephanie Candon and Jason Wilsey from Willis



Opportunity Partners family members and supporters Sondra Dahmer, Mary Tanghe and Barbara Olson



Opportunity Partners Board member Nancy Wagner, with her son Matt and husband Bill

Parents and families – join us

What: Opportunity Partners' Family Night

Dinner and information for families served by Opportunity Partners

When: Tuesday, October 20, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Where: Koch Campus, 5500 Opportunity Court, Minnetonka

Why: To meet other families and hear organizational updates

Watch for more information or contact Kayla Nance at 952-688-1598 or knance@opportunities.org.



Meet supporters Curt & Darcy Riess

Owners, Sweet Harvest Foods & PB Crave

For Curt and Darcy Riess, the mission of Opportunity Partners aligns with their personal and professional philosophies. They share why Opportunity Partners is one of their charities of choice.

How are you connected to Opportunity Partners?

We were first introduced to the organization many years ago through a former Opportunity Partners employee. We were impressed with how the organization served a special population within our society. Opportunity Partners showed us how a disability could be an “ability” if the right opportunity could be channeled. It was and remains the basis of why Sweet Harvest Foods supports Opportunity Partners.

What makes Opportunity Partners special to your family?

Opportunity Partners provides social and work opportunities for so many people who are absolutely dependent upon all of us, but also who like any other human being, desire self worth and the opportunity to support themselves. This is special to everyone.

How have people with disabilities influenced your life?

We’ve known many people with special abilities, each of them unique. Our third child Micayla, now 17, was born with Down syndrome, but has special abilities that only family or person close enough for Micayla to let into her circle could know. Through Micayla, God has opened our own family members’ eyes in ways that many others would never know.

How does charitable giving fit into your life and priorities?

Curt and I have always been charitable givers since we were married at 24 and 26, before children, before being in our own business. We have supported our tithes and commitments to organizations even in years when times were tough. We even had years of losses where we borrowed to maintain our giving,



Darcy Riess and guests attended the 2015 Opportunity Partners Gala. From left: Jan Holt, Keith Holt, Austin Riess, Mason Riess, Luke Fritze, Leah Fritze, Darcy Riess. Not pictured: Curt Riess.

confident our setbacks were temporary, but those dependent upon us were not. We have always lived by our core values, one of them being, the more you give, the more you will be entrusted to give.

Why have you supported Opportunity Partners over the years?

Our Sweet Harvest Foods and PB Crave giving philosophy is: “To give to and support those of God’s children, no matter race, creed, age or sex, who are absolutely dependent upon us.” Opportunity Partners fits that philosophy.

“We have always lived by our core values, one of them being, the more you give, the more you will be entrusted to give.”

Anything else you’d like to add?

Curt can share with you in his work in West Africa, how people in some of the world’s poorest countries will always prepare a bowl of rice, tap a coconut, and make a place for you and share what they have. Giving and sharing is a core value of a great person and we are blessed to be surrounded by so many great employees, customers, suppliers, and personal friends.

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Volume 42 • Issue 3 • Summer 2015

952-938-5511
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opportunities.org

Published in the interest of families, friends
and supporters of Opportunity Partners, Inc.
This newsletter is available in alternative
formats by request.

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