



WINTER 2010

Opportunities

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



40 years of employment success

Honeywell employee got his start thanks to Opportunity Partners

When staff at Opportunity Partners helped **Greg Martin** land an interview for a maintenance position at Honeywell, no one could have predicted how that opportunity would shape Greg's entire life. Greg landed that job – and held it for more than 40 years, rarely missing a day of work.

At Greg's recent retirement party at Honeywell, his co-workers offered him congratulations and hugs. Surrounded by pizza, cake and gifts, the group reflected on his career.

"He has a lot of friends here," said Jim Hillier, Honeywell's facility manager who worked with Greg 16 years. "Every site was like a family to him. I'm sure he'll do a lot of great things after he retires."

Over the years, Greg worked at nine different Honeywell locations throughout the Twin Cities, cleaning, sweeping, dusting and performing other janitorial duties. "He helps everyone, he's dependable and conscientious," Jim added.

Honeywell employment records show Greg hadn't had an unplanned absence from work since 1979 when he needed recovery time after breaking his ankle. His reliability was amazing, Jim noted, adding

Greg would take a cab to work if for some reason his regular bus transportation was delayed. Greg, now 60, was likely one of the first individuals to take part in a janitorial training program offered at Opportunity Partners (then Opportunity Workshop) in the 1960s. Greg's father, Fay Martin, said he and his late wife, Betty, began looking for a day program for Greg after he graduated from Roosevelt High School. "Betty looked at what was then Opportunity Workshop," he said.

After completing the training program at Opportunity Partners, Greg joined Honeywell in 1969. His case with Opportunity Partners was soon closed because of how well he was doing on his own. He went on to live independently in an apartment and has received no further social service supports all these years.

"What a fascinating example of things working out," said Greg's brother-in-law Mike Sherlock. "It's just a great story."

Greg, who retired with a full pension from Honeywell, plans to take it easy now, spending time riding his bike, doing volunteer work or taking on a part-time job bagging groceries. His gratitude toward Honeywell is clear: "Thank you for letting me work here as long as I did," he said.

Thank you, Greg, for showing what value people with disabilities can bring to the workplace and to the world.



Fay Martin, his son Greg Martin, Jim Hillier of Honeywell, and Jon Thompson, Opportunity Partners, at Greg's retirement.

Midwest Staffing Group and Route 29



Yohan Ilangaratne works on a Route 29 candy job at Opportunity Partners.

By teaming with Midwest Staffing Group, Opportunity Partners has both enhanced its ability to tackle large jobs and tapped into Midwest's pipeline of business contacts ready to benefit from Opportunity Partners' business solutions.

Opportunity Partners joined forces with Midwest Staffing Group in 2009 for temporary personnel to help complete packaging jobs; in turn, Midwest Staffing is helping spread the word about how working with people with disabilities can add value to businesses.

One such business is Route 29, a family-owned candy producer based in New Hope. Opportunity Partners workers with disabilities and personnel from Midwest Staffing recently completed 190,000 candy-filled Valentine's boxes for a national retail chain and will package 55,000 animal cracker containers early this year.

"Opportunity Partners' business solutions are all about getting the job done right and on time," said Glen Rank, Vice President of Sales & Business Operations. "It's also about realizing the potential of people and how their talents and extraordinary work ethic add value to your business."

For Midwest Staffing Group, the arrangement has been mutually beneficial. "The Midwest team takes pride in sharing our resources to create great business partnerships," said Jen Granner, Midwest Staffing Group Director of Sales.

"We are grateful for the talent that Opportunity Partners has allowed us to tap into – this is a great workforce for our business partners."

Mark your calendar for **Friday, June 4** - Midwest Staffing Group is planning a hot summer fundraiser to benefit Opportunity Partners. Live entertainment, food and fun at a concert at the Medina Entertainment Center. Watch for more details or email smaaske@opportunities.org to join the invite list.





Legislative advocacy - making a difference together

Sara Maaske, Opportunity Partners' Assistant Director, Advancement, sat down recently to discuss this year's Legislative session and the importance of joining the conversation with lawmakers.

Q: What is grassroots advocacy and what is Opportunity Partners doing?

A: Legislative advocacy has never been as important as it is right now. With looming state budget constraints and tough choices being made at the Capitol, more than ever before, we need to be a strong voice for people with disabilities. At Opportunity Partners, we are working to increase our capacity to influence and create change in Minnesota's public policy. We want to bring together everyone in our network who shares the same cause, work with them from the ground up, and give them the tools to contact lawmakers by calling, e-mailing and sending letters. We'll also be attending hearings and scheduling face-to-face meetings with legislators. Most importantly, we're sharing stories about the amazing accomplishments of the people we serve to help influence legislative actions that directly affect their lives.

Q: What do you mean by "sharing stories?" Aren't legislators looking for facts and figures?

A: We want to talk about how lives have been affected by cuts to disability programming. There's no better way to deliver that message than through a personal story. Your story paints a picture in your legislator's mind, giving them a reason to act on what you are asking them to do. However, if they do ask a tough question, we're here to support you by being a resource if legislators need more information. Still, you don't want to end the conversation that day. Be sure to follow up with a thank you note and keep the conversation going with your legislator – creating relationships builds long-term supporters.

Q: How do I find out who my legislators are?

A: The Web site www.leg.mn is a terrific resource. You can also call the House Public Information Service at 651-296-2146 or the Senate Information Office at 651-296-0504 for help in identifying your representative and senator.

Q: What is Opportunity Partners' legislative agenda?

A: We work closely with trade associations like ARRM (arrm.org) to outline our legislative agenda. Like ARRM, we are positioning ourselves to be part of the solution, stepping up to the challenge of previous cuts and finding ways to work as cost-effectively as possible, while preserving high quality services. We want to minimize any additional cuts to people with disabilities. We also support system reforms that will allow us to serve our participants more efficiently and effectively.

Q: Can one person really make a difference?

A: Absolutely! Constituency is your most powerful asset. After all, your legislators are in office to represent you – you have a voice and deserve to be heard. All of our voices combined have impact and truly can influence policy and create change.

Q: How can I get involved with Opportunity Partners' advocacy efforts?

A: Please contact me at 952-912-2492 or smaaske@opportunities.org. I'd enjoy hearing from you!

✓ *Join us for ARRM Day at the Capitol on Tuesday, March 2. The rally begins at 1 p.m. in the Rotunda.*

PEOPLE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Equipment donation to enhance learning platforms

Tennant Company recently donated several pieces of floor cleaning equipment to Dunwoody College of Technology for use in its training collaboration with Opportunity Partners. Opportunity Partners and Dunwoody are developing Certified Learning Platforms for people with disabilities to better prepare people for today's jobs and increase their competitiveness in the marketplace.

People completing the training will earn joint certification from both organizations, paving the way for greater employment opportunities. The first learning platform in professional cleaning will launch this spring.

Mike Anderson of Dunwoody College of Technology, Jon Thompson of Opportunity Partners, Greg Berg of Dalco (a Tennant distributor), Opportunity Partners participant Marc Moorvitch, and Rick Cobian of Tennant gathered recently to kick off the project.



Staff success

Congratulations to Ashley Herman, Opportunity Partners' Manager-Vocational Evaluation, for being named President of the Minnesota Vocational Evaluation Work Adjustment Association and for reviving the Minnesota chapter which had been idle since the 1980s. The association falls under the Division of the National Rehabilitation Association. The local group has 20 members and will hold trainings and provide information on vocational evaluation.

Business partners recognized

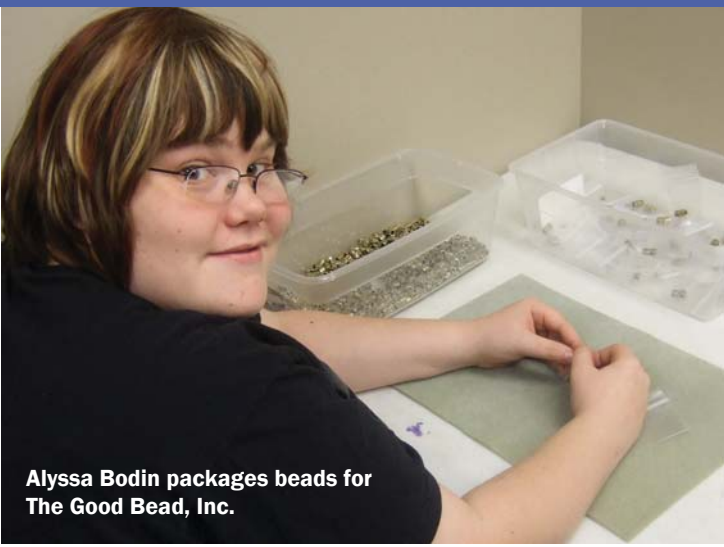
Opportunity Partners' Business Advisory Council, a group set up to provide guidance and job leads for Opportunity Partners, was recognized at a breakfast meeting in December at the Minneapolis Hilton. Diane Duguay of Kraus-Anderson was recognized as the 2009 Business Advisory Council Member of the Year. Diane, who currently employs two Opportunity Partners participants, has been a strong advocate for the organization, participating in a radio interview, a panel discussion and public speaking engagements about hiring people with disabilities. Kraus-Anderson has also been a strong philanthropic partner of Opportunity Partners over the years. For more information, contact Mary Jo Nohava at 952-351-5404.



Share your talents Volunteers needed

Opportunity Partners needs hard-working, committed volunteers to assist with office projects at Opportunity Partners locations. Work to include filing, labeling, stuffing envelopes and similar duties. Short-term or long-term assignments are available. If you are interested, contact Brigid McSherry-Scherer at volunteer@opportunities.org or 952-930-4209.

Volunteers Jane and Paul Jaeger label postcards for an Opportunity Partners mailing.



Alyssa Bodin packages beads for The Good Bead, Inc.

Gala October 23, 2010

Save the date!

Save the date for **Saturday, October 23** for the annual Opportunity Partners benefit gala, to be held at the **Hotel Sofitel** in Bloomington. To join our invitation list, call 952-912-2492 or email smaaske@opportunities.org.

Opportunity Partners also asks you to join our cause by becoming a sponsor of this year's event. The annual gala is an excellent opportunity for companies and individuals to be recognized as a community leader. For giving levels, visit us online at www.OpportunityPartners.com and click on the Events tab in the lower right-hand corner.

Good beads, good work

Participants from Opportunity Partners' Anoka County program worked at the Koch Campus in Minnetonka for several weeks to help package beads for The Good Bead, Inc. From six to eight Anoka clients and an instructor came to Minnetonka to help complete the project.

Because Anoka does not offer a center-based program, this allowed clients to experience community work in a supportive setting.

The project was the latest in a series of jobs for The Good Bead. A Supported Employment Team (SET) also works at the Minnetonka-based wholesale jewelry resource, which provides beads to specialty retailers across the United States and Canada. For more information, see www.thegoodbead.com.



Making headlines

Opportunity Partners was the featured organization in the annual Nonprofit 100 package in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* on December 20, 2009. Columnist Neal St. Anthony wrote a lengthy story about Opportunity Partners that appeared on the front page of the Business section.

The article highlighted contract business operations and the challenges faced during a difficult economy. The article is resulting in increased awareness of Opportunity Partners, leading to more business, donations, and interest in our programs.

Jessica Wentink proudly shows off her photo in the front-page Minneapolis *Star Tribune* article about Opportunity Partners.

DONOR FOCUS

Support Opportunity Partners by donating these items

Check out our "wish list" of new or gently used items for use in classroom, residential and work settings. To donate an item, call the Advancement Department at 952-930-4202.

Classroom items

- Bean bag chairs
- Craft supplies
- DVD players and burners
- Digital cameras, photo printers
- Educational DVDs
- Garden tools
- iPods, iTunes gift cards
- Labelers
- Laminators
- LCD projector
- Musical instruments
- Sensory items – massage chair pads, stress balls, sunlight lamps
- Voice recorder
- Yoga balance balls/balance ball chairs

Household items

- Kitchenware
- Patio sets
- Recliners
- Snow blower
- Tables
- Towels
- Twin sheet sets
- Vacuum cleaners

Personal items

- Hand sanitizer
- Incontinence products
- Toiletry kits with travel size items

Recreational items

- Board games, puzzles
- CDs/DVDs and players
- Exercise/sporting equipment
- Tickets to events
- Trinkets for use as prizes

Work items

- Air driver
- Adjustable height chairs
- Area rugs
- Bench sander
- Drill press
- Floor mats for foot support
- Industrial staplers/staple removers
- Pallet jack
- Power and hand tools
- Stainless steel tables
- Training items – cash registers, reception phones, price tagging guns
- Warehouse racking



Dylan Dreifke gains clerical experience as part of an Opportunity Partners youth program.

American Bank supports youth with disabilities

The American Bank Employee Foundation recently awarded a grant of \$5,000 to Opportunity Partners in support of Youth Transition Services. The funds will assist young people with disabilities to successfully transition from special education programs to adult life. Special thanks to Phyllis Stromberg, a client family member and an American Bank employee, for assisting with this opportunity.

Year-end fundraising finishes strong

Opportunity Partners is extremely grateful for the many generous donations received near the end of 2009, which helped us achieve our fundraising goals. In particular, gifts of \$150,000 and \$200,000 helped Opportunity Partners exceed its \$1 million fundraising goal. These, and many other gifts, will continue to enhance Opportunity Partners' progressive employment, residential and training programs for people with disabilities.

Calling all families and advocates

Opportunity Partners is planning a series of Family & Advocate information sessions in 2010. Topics include residential options, Youth in Transition and more. To join our invitation list, contact Sue Hayes at 952-930-4202 or e-mail shayes@opportunities.org. Events will also be posted under the Events tab at www.OpportunityPartners.org.



Congressman stops at Opportunity Partners

U.S. Rep. Erik Paulsen visits with Opportunity Partners participant Kayla Ebert during a tour of the Koch Technical & Training Campus in Minnetonka. Rep. Paulsen was invited to Opportunity Partners to discuss disability legislation and see first-hand how the organization's training initiatives are preparing workers with disabilities for careers.

Opportunity Partners to host TwinWest Business Showcase

Connect with success on **Wednesday, April 28** when Opportunity Partners hosts a TwinWest Chamber of Commerce Business Showcase.

Time: 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Place: Opportunity Partners' Koch Technical & Training Campus, 5500 Opportunity Court, Minnetonka

What: Meet Chamber members and business contacts of Opportunity Partners, exchange ideas and sales leads, and build relationships. Tours and a light lunch will be provided.

This event is free to attend and pre-registration is not required. For more information, contact Terri Hill at 952-930-4229.



Opportunity Partners is now 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.



Plentiful pasta!

Hopkins Noontime Lions spaghetti dinner to benefit Opportunity Partners

Here comes the spaghetti and meatballs! Fill your plate with pasta, and help people with disabilities live, learn and work more independently by attending the Hopkins Noontime Lions Club's spaghetti dinner from 4-7 p.m. on Thursday, March 4 at Opportunity Partners' Koch Technical & Training Campus, 5500 Opportunity Court, Minnetonka. Proceeds will benefit Opportunity Partners.

The cost for the dinner is \$7 for adults, \$4 for children under 12, and \$30 for families of five or more and group homes. Tickets are available at the door.

Dinner includes spaghetti with meatballs or meatless sauce, salad, bread, dessert and beverage. Take-out is also available.

For more information, contact Sara Maaske at smaaske@opportunities.org or 952-912-2492.



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