Celebrating success, thanks to you

Message from the CEO

Armando Camacho

Our annual Success Celebration, held September 15 at the Indiana Hilf Chair in Bloomington, recognized individuals in the categories of Impact, Choice, Heart, Partnership and Spirit. This event means so much to all of us at Opportunity Partners because we are recognizing people for accomplishments that are at the very core of our mission. Whether getting a new job, increasing independence at home, advocating for oneself or helping to achieve a major goal, these successes all enhance our quality of life.

Impact Award – Twin Lakes Manor

Tori won the Impact Award for his achievements in competitive, integrated employment. After taking classes and gaining work skills on a Supported Employment Team, he began his journey to independent employment. Tori worked jobs close to home and wherever he could help people. He identified the job sites at the Twin Lakes Manor center as a motivator for his skills and goals. With a little support, he completed the application, knew his interview and accepted the position. Recently, Tori was credited for inspiring a peer to participate in our employment program called Together Works Better. When asked if he would like to be a peer mentor for an employment exploration program called Together Works Better, he completed the process and became a mentor for an independent classroom instructor. He continues to support this social group that regularly meets for Saturday morning rides. In the past, Alan has helped with the group time, including the kids being taught to ride bikes!

Heart Award – Danielle

Danielle recently celebrated one year at KinderCare Learning in Eden Prairie. Born in Liberia, Danielle came to the United States as a child and lived in foster care and a group home throughout her childhood. For Danielle Rue, 29, finding a job that aligns with her personal goals and values fills her with happiness. Danielle started her career as a child care employee at KinderCare Learning Center in Hopkins, where she works as a classroom instructor. “I’ve always felt this is the field I need to be in,” said Danielle. “It relates well to the families, and the kids are great.” Opportunity Partners helped set the stage for success for Danielle by offering her job readiness training and skills for independence.

Choice Award – Armando

Armando earned the Choice Award for committing to a budget. A few months ago, Emily's staff helped her create a budget. She persevered, passed her high school diploma through Transitions Plus before coming to Opportunity Partners for job training and experience. Emily now resides in an apartment, he also adapted to not having staff available every morning and evening, so we worked with Warren and his roommates to move. We had provided in-home mobility rides. In the past, Alan has helped with the group time, including the kids being taught to ride bikes!

Choice Award – Danielle

Opportunity Partners helped set the stage for success for Danielle by offering her job readiness training and skills for independence.

Partnership Award – Alan

Alan earned the Partnership Award for his growth in independence. Over the last year Alan has worked to make his own choices and create opportunities for self-growth. This started with him learning how to manage his Metro card, in the past, Alan depended on staff to manage his rides and activities. Since learning how to set up demand rides, Alan is active every weekend and meets peers to movies, restaurants and shopping. He has created a social group that regularly meets for coffee or to watch movies.

Partnership Award – Alan

For Danielle Rue, 29, finding a job that aligns with her personal goals and values fills her with happiness. Danielle started her career as a child care employee at KinderCare Learning Center in Hopkins, where she works as a classroom instructor. “I’ve always felt this is the field I need to be in,” said Danielle. “It relates well to the families, and the kids are great.” Opportunity Partners helped set the stage for success for Danielle by offering her job readiness training and skills for independence.

Spirit Award – Warren John

Warren earned the Spirit Award for keeping a positive attitude during times of change. He’s maintaining relationships and advocating for himself and others. Last fall, Warren discovered that after 28 years of living in a home with two other men, he would have to move. We had provided in-home staff for Warren and his roommates every morning and evening, so he was accustomed to having staff members in his house. While Warren transitioned to a new apartment, he also adapted to not having staff available every day. He has become more independent and self-sufficient, and has handled these changes with an upbeat nature.

A PROMISE OF WE TOGETHER WE ARE BETTER

For Danielle Rue, 29, finding a job that aligns with her personal goals and values fills her with happiness. Danielle started her career as a child care employee at KinderCare Learning Center in Hopkins, where she works as a classroom instructor. “I’ve always felt this is the field I need to be in,” said Danielle. “It relates well to the families, and the kids are great.” Opportunity Partners helped set the stage for success for Danielle by offering her job readiness training and skills for independence.

Opportunity Partners is an EEO/AA employer.
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Impact Award – Torin Echols-Moore

Torin earned the Impact Award for his achievements in competitive, integrated employment. After taking classes and gaining work skills on a Supported Employment Team, he began his journey to independent employment. Torin worked with Torin to plan his housing situation and where he could help people. He identified the need for support as he was at the Home Depot as a participant, Torin said yes without hesitation. His interview nailed the application, and he completed the required training to prepare for interviews. He was excited to land a position as a competitive, integrated employment support, he completed the application, noted his interview and accepted the position. Recently, Torin was hired as a peer mentor for a competitive, integrated employment program called Together Works Better. When asked if he would like to be a peer mentor for an employment exploration program called Together Works Better, he said yes.

Choice Award – Danielle Massa

Danielle earned the Choice Award for committing to a personal goal and values that fill her heart with happiness. Born in Liberia, Danielle came to the United States as a child and lived in a group home throughout her teen years. She earned her high school diploma through Transitions Plus before coming to Opportunity Partners for job training and experience. Danielle credits Opportunity Partners with helping her heal from the abuse she endured and advocating for herself. “The basic things I learned at OP have helped me heal.” Danielle said.

Partnership Award – Alan Wilcher

Alan earned the Partnership Award for his growth in independence. Over the last year Alan has worked to make his own choices and create opportunities for self-growth; this started with him learning how to manage his Metro Milwaukee rides. In the past, Alan depended on staff to manage his rides and activities. Since learning how to set up demand rides, Alan is active every weekend and enjoys movies, restaurants and shopping. He has created a social group that regularly meets for coffee or to watch movies.

Heart Award – Ken Carlson

Ken earned the Heart Award for being a hard worker and a good person. In June, Opportunity Partners’ Ensign House – Ken’s home – was destroyed in a fire. He has experienced several moves since then, including staying at hotels and finally a group home being closed from another organization. In spite of this tragic situation, Ken has been coming to work daily and working hard. He is also helpful to staff and peers. Ken earned the Heart Award because of the courage he displayed while dealing with the disruption, and for giving it his all in spite of such trying circumstances.

Spirit Award – Warren Johnson

Warren earned the Spirit Award for keeping a positive attitude during times of change. He’s maintaining relationships and advocating for himself and others. Last fall, Warren discovered that after 20 years of living in a home with two other men, he would have to move. We had provided him with staff for Warren and he navigates every morning and evening, so he was accustomed to having staff members with him. While Warren transitioned to a new apartment, he also adapted to not having staff available every day. He has become more independent and self-sufficient, and has handled these changes with an upbeat nature.

Impact Award – Ken Carlson

Ken earned the Heart Award for being a hard worker and a good person. In June, Opportunity Partners’ Ensign House – Ken’s home – was destroyed in a fire. He has experienced several moves since then, including staying at hotels and finally a group home being closed from another organization. In spite of this tragic situation, Ken has been coming to work daily and working hard. He is also helpful to staff and peers. Ken earned the Heart Award because of the courage he displayed while dealing with the disruption, and for giving it his all in spite of such trying circumstances.

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Partnership Award – Alan Wilcher

Alan earned the Partnership Award for his growth in independence. Over the last year Alan has worked to make his own choices and create opportunities for self-growth; this started with him learning how to manage his Metro Milwaukee rides. In the past, Alan depended on staff to manage his rides and activities. Since learning how to set up demand rides, Alan is active every weekend and enjoys movies, restaurants and shopping. He has created a social group that regularly meets for coffee or to watch movies.

Spirit Award – Warren Johnson

Warren earned the Spirit Award for keeping a positive attitude during times of change. He’s maintaining relationships and advocating for himself and others. Last fall, Warren discovered that after 20 years of living in a home with two other men, he would have to move. We had provided him with staff for Warren and he navigates every morning and evening, so he was accustomed to having staff members with him. While Warren transitioned to a new apartment, he also adapted to not having staff available every day. He has become more independent and self-sufficient, and has handled these changes with an upbeat nature.

Thanks to everyone who turned out for our Success Celebration!

Together we make a difference
Schedule your gift today!
givemn.org/organization/Opportunity Partners

Hearts of gratitude, thanks to you

For Danielle Rae, 26, finding a job that aligns with her personal goals and values fills her with happiness. Danielle is a staff member at KinderCare Learning Center, in Hopkins, where she works as a classroom instructor. “I’ve always felt this is the field I need to be in.” Danielle: “I relate well to the families, and the kids are great!” Opportunity Partners helped set the stage for success for Danielle by offering her job readiness training and skills for independence. Job Development Specialist Rick Gamms worked alongside Danielle to identify employment goals, apply for jobs and prepare for interviews. She was excited to land a position as a classroom supervisor at KinderCare in August 2018. But she wasn’t done yet. While she worked part-time and parented two children of her own, Danielle attended weekly classes to obtain her Child Development Associate certification to be an independent classroom instructor. “It was hard and intense,” she described. “At times, I wanted to quit.” Danielle said.

When she’s not working, Danielle spends time with her children, who are 3 and 4, and attends Grace Church in Eden Prairie. She thanks everyone – OP staff and supporters, her co-workers, and community role models – for encouraging her and helping her achieve so much. “I’m very proud of myself,” she said. “I’m also very blessed.”

“I’m very proud of myself, she said. "I’m also very blessed and grateful."
Long-time Target employee shines

You help Darren excel

including a comment sent to Target corporate describing

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Partners. Staff member Nick Jensen, who has worked

career at Target in 2006 with the assistance of Opportunity

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Darren has received many compliments from customers,

like Darren. Want to learn how we can help?

OP helps businesses find great employees

You make a difference!

Your support means so much! Make a gift by December 31st by calling 952-912-7442 or visiting opportunities.org/donate

You help Darren excel

Long-time Target employee shines

Darren May, 34, handles his cashing duties at Target-

Knollwood with skill, moving customers through the line

with speed and accuracy. His talents have been recognized

by his supervisors, and in January he was promoted to be a

traineer of new cashiers.

"Cashier is the position I enjoy the most here," said Darren, adding that his 15-year career at Target has included

positions in the deck, as a stocker and then can't attend

before advancing to cashier and trainer.

He has an excellent memory, knowing most of the

produce codes which means he doesn't have to take the time

to look at the label before entering in the code. This speeds

up his line, which customers appreciate. Darren

found his career at Target in 2006 with the assistance of Opportunity

Partners. Staff member Nick Jensen, who has worked

with Darren about four years, said Darren is an excellent

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need a lot from me to learn the job. He does a great job

with customers."
Long-time Target employee shines

Darren is a "very nice, friendly, good cashier and a retail manager myself, I appreciate employees like him."

You help Darren excel

"Cashier is the position I enjoy the most here, " said Darren, adding that his 13-year career at Target has included positions in the deli, as a stocker and then cart attendant before advancing to cashier and trainer.

Together we advance the quality of life for people with disabilities

Win-win solutions: our specialty

Meeting customers' production needs has been an Opportunity Partners priority since 1973. Today, companies may have very different work demands than they did 40 years ago, but our end goal is the same: to help customers meet their production goals with a variety of work options.

OP helps businesses find great employees like Darren. Want to learn how we can help? Go to opportunities.org to find out more.

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Save the Date

May 2, 2020

Thank you to the Otto Bremer Trust for awarding Opportunity Partners a $30,000 grant in 2019 to provide training and assistance to help people with disabilities live independently in the Twin Cities.

Otto Bremer Trust aids community living

Dawn Beebe exemplifies successful living. With support from Opportunity Partners, Dawn has been gradually gaining more independence in her life. Dawn lives in her own condominium and moves up to eight hours of community being support from Opportunity Partners each week, with staff assisting with grocery shopping, banking and other activities. Dawn works part time at Culver's, and has also learned to do her laundry independently and in a timely manner in order to keep her work uniform clean. Staff support her in making sound money decisions, while empowering her to make choices for herself.

In all, she has made great strides toward independence in many areas of her life, on her own and making her own choices feels good, Dawn said. "It makes me happy."

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You help Darren excel
Long-time Target employee shines

Darren May, 34, handles his cashing duties at Target-Knowlton with skill, moving customers through the line with speed and accuracy. His talents have been recognized by his supervisors, and in January he was promoted to be a trainer of new cashiers.

“Casher is the position I enjoy the most,” said Darren, adding that his 15-year career at Target has included positions in the deli, as a stocker and then attendant before advancing to cashier and trainer.

He has an excellent memory, knowing most of the produce codes which means he doesn’t have to take the time to look at the label before entering in the code. This speeds up his line, which customers appreciate. Darren found his speed and accuracy to be especially useful when he worked as a cashier in the deli.

In his five years, Darren enjoys fishing with his family—once catching a 24-inch Northern on Lake Minnetonka—and is a huge Halloween fanatic. He also likes to hang out with his best friends, Alec and Chris, who he’s known since childhood.

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Eden Prairie’s Climatech is a manufacturer and distributor of plastics and die-cut components for window and door companies, appliance manufacturers, and many more industries. The company turned to Opportunity Partners earlier this year for a convenient labor solution when finding reliable workers was challenging. In less than a year’s time, Opportunity Partners has completed nearly 400,000 pieces in the 14 different jobs it runs for Climatech. Sample projects are sometimes exclusively manual, like applying adhesive to materials or using tools to complete a de-burring project.

“Climatech has become a great partner for Opportunity Partners!” said Bonnie Hagin, Senior Director of Business Development. “We have become an integral part of their production process. With good communication and seamless logistics, we stay close to their needs, timelines and budgets.”

With the increasing pace between 15,000 jobs opened and available workers, many manufacturers say workforce shortages are hurting growth. That’s where Opportunity Partners steps in, handling product assembly, packaging and labeling. Individuals gain valuable experience working on Opportunity Partner production lines, often leading to new job opportunities at community Supported Employment Teams or independent jobs.

Learn more at opportunities.org/businesses/hire-us/

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In all, she has made great strides toward independence in many areas of her life. She is very happy inside. "OP makes me feel happy inside." — Ari

"I heard OP was a good place. I like meeting new friends here." — Amber

"I like to see my staff and mingling with people. They call me a social butterfly." — Yohan

"OP makes me feel happy inside." — Ari

"I like to see my staff; they make me laugh." — Jack

"I like to be motivated by work." — Aaron

"I’ve grown, I’ve matured. I’m still learning as a person with a disability." — Christi

"I am learning about my community more and seeing what’s out in front of you." — Christi

"I’m learning things and I’m working with people. They call me a social butterfly." — Yohan

"I like to see my staff and mingling with people. They call me a social butterfly." — Yohan

"I’ve grown, I’ve matured. I’m still learning as a person with a disability." — Christi

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Save the Date
May 2, 2020

Gala

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Impact Award – Twin Lakes Manor

Tori earned the Impact Award for his achievements in competitive, integrated employment. After taking classes and gaining work skills on a Supported Employment Team, he began his journey to independent employment. Torin was able to get a job close to home where he could help people. He identified the group time position at Home Depot as a good match for his skills and goals. With a little support, he completed the application, asked his interview and accepted the position. Recently, Torin was credited for inspiring a peer to participate in our employment program called Together Works Better. When asked if he would like to be a peer mentor for an employment exploration participant, Torin said yes without hesitation.

Choice Award – Emily Lavor

Emily earned the Choice Award for committing to a good person and a good job. In June, Opportunity Partners’ Ensign House – Kehr home was destroyed in a fire. He has experienced several movies since then, including staying at hotels and finally a group home being leased from another organization. In spite of this tragic situation, Ken has been coming to work daily and working hard. He is also helpful to staff and peers. Ken earned the Heart Award because of the courage he displayed while dealing with the disruptions, and for giving it his all in spite of such trying circumstances.

Partnership Award – Alan Yang

Alan earned the Partnership Award for his growth in independence. Over the last year Alan has worked to make his own choices and create opportunities for self-growth. He started with learning how to manage his Metro Mobility rides. In the past, Alan depended on staff to manage his rides and activities. Since learning how to set up demand rides, Alan is able to take a ride to the market every weekend and invites peers to go with. Alan prefers to be removed from this mailing list. Thank you to everyone who turn out to our Success Celebration!