

BACK TO THE COMMUNITY » GIVING TO HELP YOUR NEIGHBORS



Allen Kalsta for Pioneer Press

Daniel Wojonowski giggles as activities associate Lisa Holleran applies paint to his hand to make a hand print mural at The Countryside Association in Palatine. Wojonowski and other clients are making the mural for the Art in the Countryside fundraiser June 22.

Association gives a chance to learn and work

The Countryside Association offers daily employment, training in job skills and social activities for more than 300 people with disabilities.

The non-profit company, with two work and training centers near Palatine and in Waukegan, provides support services to three hundred more clients and their families dealing with development disabilities.

The conditions of the people Countryside serves include mental retardation, autism and cerebral palsy. Most are between the ages of 18 and 65, but Countryside does provide respite services to families with children with disabilities and a transition program for high school students in Waukegan who are transitioning from school to work.

Countryside contracts with

companies, including Abbott Laboratories, Quill Corp. and Rust-Oleum Corp., to perform jobs, such as packaging, assembly and collating. The organization's clients do the work for pay at the Countryside Center, at 21154 W. Shirley Road, in unincorporated Palatine, and at the Lakeside Center, at 1301 S. Lewis Ave. in Waukegan.

The association "absolutely" would like more work, said Lisa Dworkin, director of program services. At the Waukegan site, the association operates a confidential document destruction service with an industrial shredder it recently purchased with a community development block grant.

"We follow the national guidelines for information destruction," said Dworkin. "We have all

the required monitoring equipment and we document a chain of custody. We also provide a notarized certificate of destruction."

The Lakeside Center destroys documents on an ongoing basis for 15 customers including physicians, school districts and townships. It currently is undergoing a review process to become certified in document destruction.

Of the 150 people who work or receive services at the Lakeside Center in Waukegan, 40 percent live at home and 60 percent live in group homes or the Ann Kiley Center, a residential facility for people with disabilities in Waukegan.

The work center in Palatine is the smaller and older of the two facilities, but serves 190 people, 65 percent of whom live

at home. The rest live in group homes. The clients may choose to work all day, part-time or, in the case of those who are senior citizens, to come for social activities.

"It depends on what their desires are, and we look at their ability and try to match the two," Dworkin said. The service industry for disabled people 20 years ago was structured to provide care in institutions.

Dworkin said, "Now we really focus on what the person wants to do in their life, because it is their life, not ours."

Fifteen clients have outside jobs in the community.

If the client does not have the ability to work independently, "we have work enclaves where we are able to send a staff person as a supervisor," said Dworkin. "It

gives the individual the opportunity to experience work in the community with more support than if they were there on their own. We like to expose them to different things."

Countryside also offers social activities, such as parties, dinners in restaurants and tours of businesses. If the organization did not give its clients "opportunities to meet friends and have relationships," Dworkin said it would not be fulfilling its mission, which is to "advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities and their families and support them in their efforts to live and work successfully in their chosen community."

"Remember that a person with a disability is more similar to you than different," Dworkin said.

HOW TO GIVE »

THE COUNTRYSIDE ASSOCIATION

There are several ways to donate to The Countryside Association:

YOUR TIME

Volunteer opportunities include helping at special events, teaching work-related vocabulary to clients, helping clients learn life skills, and more. For more information, visit the website, www.countrysideassn.org, or call (847) 438-8944.

YOUR MONEY

Donations may be made to Countryside Association for People with Disabilities, 21154 W. Shirley St., Palatine, 60074, or by calling Janice Janovic, the director of development, at (847) 540-3719.

YOUR GOODS

Countryside maintains a "needs" lists of items, that range from large things such as a banding machine and picnic tables to supplies, like watercolor paints and frames. Call (847) 438-8944 for more information.

[A YEAR OF CHARITY]

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