



The Phoenix

Grand Avenue Club - March 2012

The Benefits of Transitional Employment

By Joe Schultz

Since 1993 Grand Avenue Club has had a Transitional Employment (TE) program that benefits both members and the employers. When I asked employers how the GAC TE program benefits their workplace, 3 on-site supervisors responded:

“The TE program at The Grand Avenue Club is a wonderful thing and helps us here in our department in many different ways. There's the all-important guarantee of having the specified shift covered no matter what. We are always assured that help is on its way. We've been so pleased with the quality of employees you have sent to us, that we've hired on a few after their terms are up. One is one of our top employees! Our mission is to promote a healthy and sustainable community, which is why we like to hire community people and offer them opportunities to develop skills and most importantly, to earn paychecks. It's a win/win. It's a system designed to encourage perseverance and success...and its working!”

Dan Reed- supervisor at Outpost Natural Foods

“The friendships formed through this partnership have been rewarding not just for the Renaissance staff but for the children too. We have benefited from and enjoyed working with GAC members. Sometimes it's difficult to say goodbye but we always look forward to meeting our next TE worker.”

Cheryl Huffman- supervisor at Renaissance Child Development Center

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Pictured above are members working on their TE jobs l-r, Glen Satterlund at Outpost Natural Foods, Wuanette Exum at M&I Bank, and Recardo Luckett at Redeemer Lutheran Church.

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"I love working with the TE program. Each member who has worked for us has focused on a particular aspect of the job better than others and that's okay. The flexibility of the transitional employment placements is a great attribute. However, the best part of working with transitional employment placements is knowing that when there are any issues to be handled, all I have to do is make a phone call. Not having to do supervision or employment paperwork saves me lots of time."

Shelley Bruehling-supervisor at Redeemer Lutheran Church

When I asked 3 employed members about TE, they said:

"My transitional employment at Outpost Natural Foods Co-OP has been rewarding. It provided me with a disciplined schedule to follow (9:45-2:45, M-F). Second, it gives me an opportunity to see teamwork in a fast-paced environment, which will serve me well in future culinary employment. Lastly, it builds my confidence to see both co-workers and customers satisfied with the end result of my efforts. Additionally, the enthusiasm of the staff and customers with regard to the Outpost's food products is intoxicating." **Glen Satterlund**

"Working at a TE gives me a sense of enjoyment and the feeling of accomplishment. Working gives me structure and something to do during the day. It improves my self-esteem. I really enjoy working." **Wuanette Exum**

"Working at Redeemer Lutheran Church has been a great experience. It has taught me a great many working skills, and a lot of responsibility, and most of all I now have more confidence in my ability to work. Grand Avenue Club staff were depending on me to do a good job, and I did."

Recardo Luckett

We are grateful to our employers who provide work opportunities and proud of our members who meet the expectations that employers have for their employees.

- Over **150** different members worked either on Transitional or Independent Employment in 2011 and earned **\$109,686.98** at Transitional Employment and **\$828,705.32** at Independent Employment.
- GAC's 2011 Transitional Employment partners included: Ada S. McKinley, Children's Service Society of Wisconsin, Derco Aerospace, First Baptist Church of West Allis, Foley & Lardner LLP, M&I Bank, Outpost Natural Foods, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Renaissance Child Development Center, United Way of Greater Milwaukee, and Wisconsin Athletic Club.
- In 2011, GAC's independently employed members worked with over 40 different employers in Milwaukee including: Bayside Middle School, Bilt-Rite, Bradley Center, Brown Deer School System, Chocolate Factory, City of Milwaukee, Columbia– St. Mary's Hospital, Community Advocates, Foley & Lardner LLP, House of Corrections, Levy Restaurants, Mental Health America, Milwaukee County Zoo, NAMI, Outpost Natural Foods, P & H Mining, Pick'n Save, Potowotami, Quad Graphics, Renaissance Child Development Center, Robert Haft Technologies, UWM, and Wisconsin Athletic Club.



Pictured above is Michael Todorovich at his Independent Employment position at the Milwaukee County Zoo.

Next to Normal

By Jenny Hackbarth & Nikki Lelinski

Grand Avenue Club was a proud Community Partner for the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's production of "Next to Normal." Some GAC colleagues were invited to be a part of the initial rehearsals as cast members developed their characters. The director Mark Clements felt that the actors would learn a lot by hearing our colleagues' stories of their "lived experiences." Throughout the run of the production Grand Avenue Club colleagues, along with other community partners, attended the show and provided information about GAC in the lobby of the theater. The two of us were among the many GAC colleagues who "staffed" the table with all the information in the theater lobby. The Rep was really committed to bring information about many mental health organizations to its audiences.

We attended a Wednesday evening production of the show complete with the "Rep In Depth," which was a discussion with one of the cast members about the production. One of us (Jenny) found this part to be more entertaining and enlightening than she had expected it to be. The play was well attended and we had the opportunity to speak with many curious playgoers before the show and during intermission.

This play is powerful. It grabbed your attention from the minute you sat down and held it through the rest of the play. It took the observer through a range of emotions and the acting and singing were wonderful in bringing the audience into the experience of a family that is coping with the bi-polar illness of its wife/mother.

The production went late into the evening but to our surprise we were able to connect with many interested playgoers after the show. We are thankful to everyone at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater for partnering with us and allowing us to inform more people in the community about Grand Avenue Club. We are also grateful to the Rep for making it possible for so many people from the GAC community to see this show and for their continued generosity to us.

GAC Art Collective is Expanding Horizons

By Colleen Kassner

The GAC Art Collective wants to extend a heartfelt "thank you" to *Blutstein and Brondino Fine Art* at 207 E. Buffalo Street, Gallery 212, for their exhibition of works by members of our GAC Art Collective. They have opened their doors and hearts to us and exhibited works by popular GAC artists Colleen Kassner, Rhonda-Gatlin Hayes, Cheryl "Cyndaar" Banks, Rory McKeown, Sandra Delaney, Harvey Taylor, Janet McCray, Tracy Dreher, Blanche Brown, and Dano Peterson.

On January's Gallery Night, Friday, January 20, *Blutstein and Brondino Fine Arts* hosted a steady stream of visitors to the gallery. On Thursday, January 26, they held a special reception for GAC Artists. It was a lovely event. Many people came specifically to see the work of GAC artists as well as wonderful work by other self-taught artists. It was a great way for some of our favorite artists to reach a larger audience. There were many sales, with most of the money going to the GAC Art Collective. We are very thankful for the generosity of Barbie Blutstein and Steven Brondino for opening their hearts and gallery to GAC.

GAC Art Collective will be exhibiting "Worlds of Whimsy" for our spring *Gallery Night and Day* on Friday, April 20 from 4:30-8:30pm and Saturday April 21 from 1-3pm. The exhibit will take place at Gallery Grand @ GAC. (Please use the Water Street entrance.) The show will run through July 9th. If you can't make the Gallery Night and Day opening, just give the gallery a call at 414-795-7108 to arrange a showing.



Pictured left is Dano Peterson conversing with fellow artist Harvey Taylor during Gallery Night and Day. The painting on the right is called Picasso's Lady Friend by GAC member Rory McKeown.

Multiculturalism at GAC

By Olivia Gipson and Rhonda Gatlin-Hayes

GAC is a diverse community that includes people from many different backgrounds. We celebrate all the holidays and we also weave the themes of special months into our programming.

For Black History Month a group of Black History Committee colleagues created a large wall display, power point presentations, and table toppers for our dining room with information about African-Americans who have made contributions to America. On a Wednesday night we played "Black History Jeopardy" to test how much we had learned by doing these projects.



GAC colleagues pose for a picture after playing Black History Jeopardy.

A group of 18 women of our Women's Group saw the play, "Neat," thanks to the generosity of our friends at Renaissance Theater Works. In addition, 55 GAC people were there for the opening night production of "To Kill A Mockingbird" at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater. Thank you to our friends at the Rep! Here is what some of the members of the Black History Committee have to say:

Lisa Gross: A few months ago I attended a panel discussion at GAC that dealt with mental illness in the African American Community. All the panelists understood what it is like to be African American and have a mental illness. The evening made me less embarrassed because one panelist spoke openly about things that would normally be tucked away and not addressed. I was also looking forward to Black History Month and it was well worth the wait."



Standing is Rhonda Gatlin-Hayes, the Moderator for the panel discussion at GAC on Mental Illness in the African American Community.

Andrew Seny: "Having Black History month celebrated at Grand Avenue Club made me feel proud because it shows true diversity in our community. Being part of the Black History Committee gave me a sense of empowerment and I was happy to be involved in something larger than me. Participating in 'Black History Jeopardy' allowed me to learn things I didn't know."

Gerald Lloyd: "It was nice to be part of something besides just being at home, especially during the winter months when there is not a lot to do."

Janet McCray: "It was a real treat for me to able to attend the play "Neat" at Renaissance Theater Works. It was a one-woman show about an African-American woman and all the people in her life. I could relate to all 24 characters portrayed in the play."

Olivia Gipson: "I was so grateful to see the play "Neat." Black History month here at GAC was really nice. We are learning Black History. I never knew too much about Black History before."

Since March is Women's History Month, several of us will be attending the International Women's Day Celebration organized by The Women's Fund on Sunday, March 11 at Mount Mary College. Our Women's Group is also hosting a "Bread & Roses Breakfast" at GAC from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 28 to celebrate women's contributions and women's lives.



Eight fans of the play "Neat", front, Nikki Lelinski, Dawn Malone, Susie Katz, and Ellen O'Grady, back row, Rhonda Gatlin-Hayes, Lashawanda Allen, Rachel Forman and Olivia Gipson.



Dancing the night away are Amer Ariss, Susie Katz, and Lisa Gross.

DANCING THE NIGHT AWAY AT GAC

By Janet McCray, Susie Katz, and the GAC Culinary Unit

On Friday evening, February 17, 2012, GAC had its first Friendship Dance. The dance took place just days after a holiday celebrating love and romance....but we celebrated our strong friendships and our collegiality at GAC.

After a light supper we danced to the music supplied by a DJ, had a dance contest that was judged by our DJs, played "the Colleague Game," which is based on the TV show of a few years ago, "The Newlywed Game."

The dance took place in *GalleryGrand* on our fourth floor, which easily accommodated the 45-50 dancers.

Here are some of the things that people said about the dance.

Trixie Morse: "The overall enthusiasm and the feeling of friends being together was amazing. I wish we had more events like this."

Rory McKoewn: "I really enjoyed dancing with staff colleagues."

Louis Poore: Although I only chair danced, it was really enjoyable to watch others on the dance floor.

Joyce Mathews: "The best part about our Friendship Dance was all of us celebrating each other, having a good time, and dancing."

Andrew Seny: The food was great. The music was good. It was nice to see everyone dance and have fun together.

Bruce Holan: "I let my hair down (so to speak) and had enough trust in colleagues to show a seldom seen side of myself." (Full disclosure: My hairstyle would be described as a "buzz cut!")

Mary "Red" Chonowski: It was thrilling. I loved it. I burnt up a few calories too."

Janet McCray: It was the best dance ever and the colleagues were awesome. There was a lot of togetherness. Whatever was on people's minds was let go and we forgot about our problems. The things that I am going through just faded away and that was true for everybody, from what I could tell. It was a night to enjoy your friends and to step outside your own skin. It was a great night.

At the end of the celebration we all joined hands as one Big Family and danced to the Sister Sledge song, "We Are Family." The following Monday morning we decided to make the Friendship Dance an annual GAC tradition.



GAC colleagues participating in a friendship version of the newlywed game. It was a competition between the three units. Amer Ariss and Mary "Red" Chonowski (center) from the Admin Unit won.

Love On The Loose

A column created and written
by Deb Love

The best Clubhouses govern themselves according to the "International Standards on Clubhouse Programs," of the International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD). At each house meeting we discuss one of these so that new members will gain an understanding of what the Standards say and how they are implemented by GAC members and staff. My experience is that even those of us who have been long-time members can benefit from reviewing the Standards regularly. It occurred to me that our family members, friends and associates outside of the clubhouse, as well as our donors and employers don't know enough about these Standards. I hope that as I highlight the Standards in my articles from time to time in the *Phoenix*, readers will gain an awareness of them and an appreciation for their importance to me and all my colleagues, both members and staff.

I have asked my colleagues to interpret Standard #1 as they understand it.

Standard #1 Membership is voluntary and without time limits.

Eric Risch—"You can come and go whenever you want; you are not required to stay for a specific amount of time."

Christine Peters—"It means freedom and choice. I'm free to help, to learn, to talk and ask questions."

Jennie Hackbarth—"I can come and go when I want and no one can force me to be a member."

Dano Peterson—"It's like coming in to visit with friends. There's no pressure."



Deb Love gets ideas from Brian Gumma about a future Love on the Loose article.

Recardo Lockett—"We can come as we want and leave as we want. It's not like we have to be here to please someone else."

Rory McKeown—"There is no pressure to come here and I also have a choice of responsibilities I want to take on. I'm free to do what I want."

Miriam Pat Thorpe—"I like the fact that it's open-ended and I'm not boxed in. No matter what. I can always come back. There are no dues. I can just come and participate when and how I want to."

John Manzuk—"It's unconditional. Once you're a member you're always a member. You control your membership. You're in charge of what you do at GAC."

Gerald Lloyd—"I can help out as much as I can when I have the energy to do so. When I don't have the energy, no one forces me to do something."

Richard Pierce—"Like we say, 'Once a member always a member.' It's up to you if you want to come or be a member. You're not forced to do anything and you get to choose what you want to do."

Shelby Manuel—"It's up to the individual. You are a member for life. It's nice to get involved at GAC."

Anne Kracht- "When I get an Outreach call I realize, "Gee! I'm still part of the community."

Joe Schanen-"I can use the Clubhouse anyway I want. It prevents me from being isolated at home. It allowed me to come to GAC and work in the "work-ordered day and get my self-confidence back. Now I'm working for pay in the community."

Pam Austin-"You can come whenever you want to come. Personally, I think everyone should come everyday."

Chris Bystra-"No one is forced to be a member and membership never ends."

As for me, Standard #1 has given me a great sense of belonging for many years. I know that I will always be a member no matter what. I value the freedom I have to choose the work I want to be involved with. I can come and go as often or as little as I like, but I'm always part of the community. This results in my having a great sense of security.

Getting To Know Our Members: Andrew Seny

By Matt Heyne

Andrew first arrived at Grand Avenue Club (GAC) nearly 3 months ago after being referred by his psychiatrist. Before he visited GAC he thought it was a place where people participated in group therapy and recreational activities but his experience turned out to be very different.

His initial impression of GAC was that it had a warm and open atmosphere. He enjoyed himself immediately and has become a familiar face in the Culinary Unit (2nd Floor). Andrew's favorite activities include being part of the Culinary Unit and doing office work. He also enjoys perusing in the library and interacting with other members. He has noticed that since he became a member he is more outgoing and feels less lonely. In the near future Andrew would like to take advantage of GAC's Transitional Employment (TE) opportunities.

Andrew grew up in Milwaukee and has many fond memories of enjoying walks with his father and their dog, Ernie, an Irish setter. He has earned 62 credits in liberal arts at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) and has plans to attend UW-Milwaukee to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. He wants to use the re-

sources of the Supported Education Program at Grand Avenue Club for help with the application process and throughout his time as a student.

Andrew's goal is to be a social worker specializing in working with people who suffer from HIV and AIDS. Andrew was inspired by his time as a volunteer at a grassroots AIDS/HIV organization. In his spare time he likes to ride bikes, hike, & write poetry. He has brought his writing interests into his time at the GAC by participating in the Writers' Group, which meets weekly. Andrew feels that he has achieved his initial goals at Grand Avenue Club, which included wanting to get up in the morning and establishing a routine. Now that he has done this he has set his sights toward his career goals and wants to get going on those.



Working together in the dish room at GAC are l-r, Luis Reyes, Earl Standish and Andrew Seny.

THANK YOU, ROCKWELL AUTOMATION

By Earl Cooper and Carl Lockrem

Grand Avenue Club doesn't typically promote short term volunteerism at GAC because members and staff (and a few graduate students doing internships with us) do most of the work. However, there are always tasks that never get done, despite our good intentions. So when the Global HR Operations Team from Rockwell Automation selected us as their agency to partner for some group volunteer efforts we knew exactly where we could use their help.

On February 1st, this group worked side by side with members and staff to tackle large organizing tasks. Part of the group sorted through three tables of food storage containers in our Culinary Unit, pairing lids with the right bowls. Tony Maze, Rockwell Automation's Manager for North America Benefits Delivery, didn't think it was much of a challenge at first, but two hours later he kept everyone smiling as he came to shout out "SNAP" with each match that he found. Another group helped to finalize the organization of our Multi-Purpose Room so that we can use our horticulture table as well as our sewing and crafts area while still having access to our paper product storage.

We accomplished quite a lot with our friends from Rockwell Automation. Tanae Wolfman, Senior Administrative Associate, said in a follow up email, "we appreciated the opportunity to be of service to Grand Avenue Club and we look forward to future opportunities."

Well, Tanae, all of us at GAC say "thank you" to your team at Rockwell Automation for spending the day with us and being so productive on our behalf. Much like Tony getting excited about finding a matching lid, we want to say "SNAP" because we think we found a pretty great match with Rockwell Automation's Global HR Operations and GAC!



Representatives from Rockwell Automation and GAC colleagues pose for a picture after a busy day of working at GAC. In no particular order: Tanae Wolfman, Szymon Najdychor, Tony Maze, Dave Mancl., Chris Santell, Lupe Vargas, Amanda Dziekonski, Sam Facey, Vickie Schmidt, Paul Shane, Andrew Seny, and Jeremiah McCallar.



Please Save the Date for Grand Event 2012

Thursday, June 14th

The Pfister

5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

This year's theme of Education and Opportunity comes from the strong commitments of this year's honorees:

*Ted and Mary Kellner
&
Arnie Peltz*

Invitations will be sent out soon. Details about sponsorship opportunities are available by contacting development@grandavenueclub.org or calling 414-727-3361.

Donations processed from January 1st to February 29th

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March 2012

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A community that works

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WE'RE ON THE WEB:
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The Phoenix was named for the mythical bird that grew up out of the ashes of destruction. It is a symbol of life and hope.

Grand Avenue Club's mission is to provide people who have experienced mental illness with opportunities for work, housing, education, recreation and friendship.



Grand Avenue Club is accredited by the International Center for Clubhouse Development and is a United Way community partner.



United Way
of Greater Milwaukee

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