Workshops Are Much More Than “Just” A Place to Work

by Bob Koch, MASWM President

Past winter newsletters have begun with the anticipation of the coming New Year and the opportunities and challenges it will bring.

This year is no different. The economy seems to continue to ease somewhat, and there is a sense of optimism as work for a number of shops has improved, and new opportunities have been created for our employees. Workshops continue to be creative in their business efforts and partnerships with business and within the community. This is making what we all hope will be a brighter and better 2014.

While we meet our mission of employing individuals with disabilities, many shops go beyond employment and provide additional services. Recently, at the State DESE Board meeting, two managers gave reports on their shops and workshops in general. They discussed the success, challenges and entrepreneurship of finding work, funding needs, etc. In addition, they spoke of the services workshops provide to individuals beyond employment. Stories of assisting an employee or his or her family with Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, housing and other issues are common. For many of our workers with disabilities, the workshop is a place they feel comfortable with and go to for help. For others, it is the only resource available.

A good example of this came recently for Empac, as the mother of one of our employees passed away. The employee, who had limited means, came to the shop staff, unsure of how she would be able to pay the funeral and burial expenses. Employees, staff, board members and the community contributed enough to cover all expenses and provide a headstone for the grave. This is just one example of the compassion and devotion of workshops.

While we have the good news and optimism, we continue to face challenges at the state and national levels. The ruling of the Department of Justice that facility-based employment violates ADA laws under the Olmstead Decision continues to be a subject that we will monitor.

We will continue to see the details of the ACA develop and try to interpret how this will affect workshops and their employees. Our legislative chair and consultant will also continue to keep a close watch on any legislation that may impact workshops. While we have a lot to be thankful for and look forward to, we need to continue to be diligent in our efforts and have our legislators in our shops and keep them informed, as this is as important as ever.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the winter MASWM meeting January 21 and 22 in Jefferson City.

DESE Changes Move to Final Step

Proposed changes to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education workshop regulations have been approved by the Board of Education and are in the hands of the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules.

Fulvio Franzi, director of DESE’s Sheltered Workshop Division, said the changes include reduction of restrictions on workshop organizations. “It relieves the restriction that a workshop corporation can only operate a workshop,” he said. “It allows a workshop board to operate other services, such as transportation.” Other changes concern reimbursement for a broader range of training programs and numerous language edits.

Franzi said that if the rules are approved by JCAR, they will be published. That is expected to take from two to as much as six months.

MASWM President Bob Koch noted that workshops had input into the proposed changes, including two managers who attended a DESE board meeting this fall, Susan Legaard and Larry Leek.

Leek, CEO for a workshop in Springfield, said much of their presentation involved today’s economic challenges for (please continue on next page)
The MASWM January meeting is Jan. 21 and 22 in Jefferson City.

The meeting includes a Board of Directors meeting Tuesday, Jan. 21 from 9 a.m. to noon and an association meeting from 1 to 4 p.m.

On Wednesday, Jan. 22, the much-anticipated Legislative Breakfast is from 7:30 to 9 a.m. in Hearing Room 2 of the Capitol Building. Visits to legislators’ offices are scheduled from 9 a.m. to noon. The meeting will be held at the Truman Hotel and Conference Center.

The complete 2014 meeting schedule is as follows:
- January 21 and 22 at the Truman Hotel and Conference Center in Jefferson City
- April 9, 10 and 11 at the Country Club Hotel in Lake Ozark
- October 6, 7 and 8 at the Hilton Promenade at Branson Landing in Branson

(Special thanks to Vice President Brent Blackwell for organizing the dates and locations.)

Did You Know: Workshops in Missouri

- 7,040 people with disabilities employed in workshops.
- 5,338 full time equivalent—30 hours a week.
- Demographic breakdown—approximately one-third urban, two-thirds rural.
- 60 percent of income from contracts with businesses.
- State support—approximately 20 percent.
- County support—approximately 15 percent.
- Other income, including fund raising, contributions, etc.—five percent.
- Consumers average age is 41.2.
- As of Sept. 30 2013, JVS Workshop in Kansas City ceased operation when the number of consumers dropped to 18. On Dec. 15, a new workshop was certified in Bolivar—Burrell Working Solutions, Inc.
- The total number of workshops statewide remains at 90, with an additional seven satellite operations.
- The total number of hours worked was 750,000 work hours per month, eight million man hours per year.

(Courtesy of Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Sheltered Workshops.)

DESE Changes Move to Final Step

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workshops.

“Both of our messages concentrated on how the economy has negatively impacted all workshops’ ability to identify and land work and the growing competition from for-profit companies that are also seeking the work we have traditionally received,” he said. “We stressed how nearly 70 to 80 percent of our income is derived from our subcontracting work and the growing importance of developing our own businesses. We tried to demonstrate what a value workshops are to the state and what a benefit they are to those who utilize their services, both as an employee and as a customer.

The two managers also asked for any assistance approaching the Department of Economic Development for tax incentives for launching new businesses.

“We strongly suggested that Missouri’s industrial model be used as a national model for all workshops across the country,” Leek noted. “We also attempted to demonstrate the importance of our relationship with the Department of Education and the value it brings to each of our shops, regardless of the size.”

The managers also related workshop events that illustrated how workshops impact the lives of those with whom they work. “I shared a story about a parent who, at a community meeting, publicly thanked our shop for ‘restoring his son’s dignity.’” They stressed the dignity for anyone doing a job and that workshop employees deserve dignity, too. “We have not found a job the employees cannot do when they have the right accommodations,” Leek said.

Roger Garlich Mourned

Longtime disability advocate Roger Garlich, 74, died Jan. 6 after a short illness. Garlich helped create the Center for Human Services in Sedalia. After retiring from the executive director position in 2009, he served as a consultant and with the Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities in Jefferson City.
Section 14(c): Numerous Questions and Challenges

One of the biggest challenges facing the nation’s sheltered workshops—including those that employ more than 7,000 people in Missouri—involves questions over Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Some outside the workshop community question paying some workers disabilities below minimum wage. This includes well-intentioned people who may lack experience in the business and funding aspects of workshops. Higher wages would always be desirable, but without massive state and federal subsidies, they are impossible.

Workshops operate substantially on funds generated by their business services. While county and state subsidies are important, business contract income represents the single most important source—some 60 percent of workshops’ revenue.

In a competitive business world, additional income to pay consumers higher wages would have to come from state and county taxpayers, something that is highly unlikely.

This scenario is often overlooked by supporters of legislation such as HR 831, the so-called “Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013.” It would direct the Secretary of Labor to discontinue special wage certificates that allow workers with disabilities to be paid at less than minimum wage.

While it sounds good, many believe this would have the opposite effect of its intentions. If workshops were required to meet higher pay levels without significant additional funding, they would be forced to close.

Settlement Closes Rhode Island Workshops

For years, over 200 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Providence, Rhode Island, were employed in workshops run by an organization called Training Thru Placement.

In June, the United States Department of Labor revoked Training Thru Placement’s certificate under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Also in June, the US Department of Justice reached a settlement with the state of Rhode Island and the city of Providence that seeks to ensure better employment options for people with disabilities. The settlement was the result of an Americans with Disabilities Act investigation that started in January.

Critics pointed to “isolated” working conditions and the sub-minimum wages paid to workers, an average wage of $1.57 per hour, with some people making as little as $0.14. Several analyses, however, stressed that the biggest issue was the lack of options and “choice” available to the Rhode Island workers.

In 2012, advocacy groups representing people with disabilities in Oregon filed a class-action lawsuit against the state, saying that adults there were also working menial jobs for low pay, with no opportunity for integrated, competitive employment. The governor issued an executive order that would reduce funding to sheltered workshop programs and increase the number of people with developmental disabilities in the general workforce.

Workshop Updates Include Contact Info Changes

Eric Hinton is now the manager at Boone Center, Inc. (BCI) in St. Peters. Hinton is formally chief executive officer. Contact information is ehinton@boonecenter.com, 636-875-5205. The shop is at 200 Trade Center Drive, St. Peters, 63376.

Frankie Hahn is now the director of Madison County Sheltered Workshop in Fredericktown. His contact information is 573-783-4037, mcsww63645@att.net.

Kelly Polston is now general manager of Handi-Shop, Inc. Contact information for the shop in Mexico is 573-581-1191 or hsimanager@handi-shop.com.

Manager Martha Nanneman at Chariton County Workshop in Keytesville has a new e-mail address to share: charitonWorkshop@gmail.com.
Empac Group in Washington is proud to announce that Empac Employment Resources has received a three-year CARF (Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) accreditation.

This is a major milestone in the development of this program and is required by the division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to become a resource provider for job-seeking clients.

Empac notified VR and expects to be accepting referrals under the JobOps program. This is a significant step for the program. The staff worked diligently to prepare for this two-day survey, and they are extremely proud of this success.

Marshall’s Teams Up with Empac

As part of their grand opening, the new Marshall’s Store in Washington awarded Empac Group a $5,000 donation and the opportunity to work with them on community employment strategies.

Empac looks forward to having Missy Roth, store manager, join the Community Alliance Team and partner with them for employment opportunities.

Congressman Meets with Empac Group

Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer visited the Empac Group location in Sullivan in September. The Congressman met with several members of the staff, board of directors and Community Alliance Team to discuss employment of individuals with disabilities in Franklin County.

During his visit, he learned about the new organizational structure and service delivery model created by the merger of the two sheltered workshops located in Sullivan and Washington. Now called Empac Group, the organization uses a new service delivery model to provide employment for people with disabilities in the workshop setting, as well as in the community.

The tour included the Congressman and his staff with members of the board of directors, Community Alliance Team and co-workers.
Community Helps Recycling Center Grow in Grandview

JobOne in metropolitan Kansas City celebrated the opening of a larger drop-off recycling center in Grandview in September. Formerly known as Foundation Workshop Inc., JobOne had opened the original recycling center in 2008. The recent event drew 85 people, including JobOne staff and board members, recycling center workers, customers, vendors, Grandview city staff and aldermen, Grandview Chamber of Commerce staff and community members. Speakers included Missouri Sen. Jason Holsman, Missouri Rep. Joe Runions, Jake Jacobs, executive director of Development Disability Services of Jackson County and Grandview Public Works Director Dennis Randolph. Holsman and Runions presented proclamation resolutions from the Missouri Senate and House of Representatives to JobOne in honor of its work in the community. Grandview Aldermen Annette Turnbaugh, Jim Crain and Brian Hochstein also attended the event.

“This is one of those double-bonus endeavors where the activity here is improving the environment, and it’s helping clean up our community, while providing good jobs for those people who need them to feel satisfied and a part of the workforce,” Sen. Holsman told the crowd.

JobOne is a nonprofit agency that provides jobs for adults with disabilities in the Kansas City region through partnerships with government organizations and the business community. JobOne Recycling Services operates the drop-off recycling center largely with the help of adults who have developmental disabilities. The agency aims to expand community employment options for people with disabilities, while promoting sustainability in Grandview and providing valued services to local businesses and residents.

“By moving here, we’ve been able to go from an employment level of about five or six employees up to 15 now,” said JobOne CEO Aaron Martin. “For every worker we’ve been able to take out of our workshop facility here in Grandview, their wages are increasing significantly. And, they’re able to experience new types of work and have new opportunities here.”

Grandview doesn’t provide curbside recycling services, but instead partners with JobOne to operate the recycling center. “We think it’s a nice model for our city,” said Public Works Director Dennis Randolph. “It’s different than the model in the rest of the cities around the area, but we think it’s a good model for Grandview right now, and it will hopefully just keep blooming.” At the open house, Randolph explained that the city and JobOne are seeking grant funds to open another recycling center on the east side of the city.

The new building offers almost three times more space. JobOne added three balers, for a total of six, to help compact recyclables into blocks that can be stacked and transported. It also expanded the range of accepted recyclable plastics and installed a conveyor-system sorting line to process larger quantities of materials more efficiently. During August alone, JobOne collected approximately 113 tons of recyclables, preventing these reusable materials from ending up in area landfills.

In addition to operating a 24/7 drop-off recycling center for residents, JobOne also offers pickup services for high-volume local businesses. And, it can handle wide-ranging disassembly and sorting projects.

“There’s a lot of industry right down the street, around the corner, all throughout this area,” said JobOne Recycling Services Manager Mike Hatfield. “They’ve been very supportive of us and what we do. And, they are excellent customers.”

Hatfield really enjoys interacting with JobOne’s employees who have disabilities, and he thinks the community does too. “They’re very capable people, and not only that, they’re a lot of fun to work with.”

In November, the organization launched an aluminum can buy-back program as a way to collect a greater volume of this reusable material. Several employees with disabilities are developing new skills to help operate the program.

JobOne Recycling Services has been funded in part by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, MARC Solid Waste Management District, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County—eitas.
Lamar Workshop Receives Grant to Expand Recycling

Lamar Enterprises recently received a $45,176 grant from the Rural Development division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in order to expand its recycling effort.

Officials from Rural Development joined area leaders at the workshop in November to formally award the grant and tour the facility.

The workshop began as a small operation in Lamar but has grown to a large facility. Manager Judd Chesnut told the visitors that the workforce of 35 people are very enthusiastic and love their work.

“It gives them a positive purpose in life,” Chesnut said. Additionally, many of the products produced at Lamar Industries are used by local industries.

The grant is being used to purchase a one-half ton Ford truck to transport recyclable materials and two 16-foot Kodiak Recycle Trailers and recycle bins for on-site drop off products.

State and local officials gathered at Lamar Enterprises in November to award a $45,176 grant to expand the workshop’s recycling program. Those present included (from left) Greg Bramwell, Rural Development; Steve McIntosh, representing U.S. Senator Roy Blunt; Carla McManis, workshop secretary; Judd Chesnut, Lamar manager; Janie Dunning, state director of Rural Development; Keith Divine, Lamar mayor; David Rausch, representing U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill; Lynn Calton, Lamar city administrator; and Logan Powell, Lamar US Bank.

Workshop Adds Tornado Shelters with Help from Community

Joplin Workshops Inc. recently received three tornado shelters from the City of Joplin. The workshop submitted a grant to the city and was awarded the tornado shelters, which will hold 34 people per shelter. JWI has submitted a grant request to the Joplin Tornado First Response Fund for support to move and install the shelters, reported Ron Sampson, executive director. The shelters will give JWI peace of mind when the weather turns bad and provide safer places for the protection of employees.

Crowder Industries Obtains Tax Funding Through SB40

Crowder Industries is the latest workshop to access Senate Bill 40 funding to help support employment for people with disabilities.

After hard work through 2013 and initial rejection from Newton County Commissioners, Crowder Industries was successful in running a positive SB40 levy campaign in November. The workshop will now obtain county tax funds, starting January 2015, to help support people with disabilities in that area and help them experience meaningful employment in the workshop. This places Crowder Industries on par with all the other workshops in Missouri. Crowder had many volunteers and much help from employees to spread the important message that “work matters” to make this a successful campaign, especially in this difficult economic environment with foreign competition in the manufacturing field. Thanks goes to the Crowder board, staff and volunteers who did such a fantastic job!

Southeast Enterprises and its community partners plan to build on the success of last year’s drive and recycle over 34,000 pounds of holiday lights between November and January 26, 2014.

In addition to keeping holiday lights out of the landfill, the effort provides employment for more than 160 employees with developmental disabilities. The work takes place with more than 165 participating schools, businesses, recycling centers and community organizations.

Southeast crews collect the full containers and exchange them for empty ones weekly. There is no fee or expense to participate in the program, and 100 percent of the holiday lights they collect will be recycled.

After the first 23 days, they had collected 6,584 pounds of lights. The goal was for another 27,416 pounds to help meet the 34,000-pound goal. Click here to read more about the drive and watch the thermometer rise.
Columbia Workshop Efforts Featured by KOMU

Kingdom Projects, Inc. in Columbia was recently featured by station KOMU.

Operations Manager Lon Little said the story dealt with KPI’s efforts to revamp its company image. Little and organization board members decided to create a new logo for the company, produce more attractive signage, revamp their resale shop and make the company more visible to the community. The overall goal is to expand employment opportunities for more than 100 area residents with disabilities, while providing recycling services to the community.

“The goal is to attract more customers at this point in time,” Little noted. He also pointed out that the company has struggled over the years with getting the word out, and many residents are unaware of the many resources KPI provides.

KPI Public Relations board member Allan Ensor said, “We realized that even though we’ve been in the community since 1976, many people would not know or really understand the organization, so it was an opportunity to reintroduce ourselves.”

In order to get the project started in a cost-effective way, Little found help from a marketing and business class at William Woods University.

“In a tight economy, we’ve had to adjust from contracts that we don’t have anymore,” said Little. KPI board members and Little brought their rebranding plan to Dr. Linda Duke, who created a project titled, “PR Campaign for KPI Recycling,” that she assigned to her students.

The board worked closely with Dr. Duke’s class and laid out its expectations for the students. Students were split into four groups and had to choose two areas of the company’s rebranding to work on.

“It’s more of a give and take exchange; we are providing the students with a project and real world experience, while they are creating a new company logo for us,” said Little.

Students came up with slogans, created color schemes and gave a lot of input to board members on different things KPI can do to re-establish themselves in the community.

Ashley McCaffrey a graphic design student at William Woods who worked on the PR Campaign for KPI said, “I think it’s a unique perspective, and I really enjoy the hands-on work.”

KPI launched their new logo in November, and Ensor said he has already seen progress since the project began in January, “I’ve seen several things come together in that we have the new logo and the new brochure, and we’ve got a plan to go forward with reintroducing our sales to the community.” These are just the first few steps completed in the multi-step process.

The resale shop is the next step in the rebranding process the company is currently addressing. KPI is working with Dr. Duke’s retail management class to reorganize and emphasize the resale shop. “We are working on different things such as advertising, store layout, marketing and things of that nature to get the word out about the resale shop to the Fulton community,” said McCaffrey.

Monroe Workshop Receives Donation From Farmers, Monsanto

The Monroe City Sheltered Workshop was chosen by an area farmer as the recipient for the third annual America’s Farmers Grow Communities, Monsanto Fund, in Monroe County.

Tracy Morgan had the opportunity to direct the $2,500 donation to a nonprofit organization in his county that the farmers organization felt strengthens their community. This year, winning farmers from counties that were declared natural disaster areas by the U.S.D.A. were able to direct an additional $2,500 donation to a nonprofit organization, allowing him to choose an additional recipient. The check was presented to representatives of the Monroe City Sheltered Workshop at Madison High School in March.

Morgan’s sister is a long time employee of the workshop and was proud and excited to be a part of the family’s presentation.

After receiving this money, the workshop was able to take its employees bowling at Pal Bowl in Palmyra and treat them to a meal at Golden Corral afterward. They were able to go to the Missouri State Fair and enjoy a meal on the way home. All of this occurred at no expense to the employee. At the annual Christmas Party held Dec. 8th, everyone received a sweatshirt with their recycling logo and their name on it—also made possible by this donation.

The workshop is very blessed to have many caring people like Tracy Morgan looking out for their “special employees.” The success of the Monroe City Sheltered Workshop is a joint effort by many people who care.

The workshop thanks Monsanto for providing such funds to farmers to be distributed to nonprofit organizations in Monroe County and a special thanks to Tracy Morgan for providing it to the Monroe City Sheltered Workshop.
River Bluff Industries Featured on St. Louis Channel 5

KSDK News Channel 5 in St. Louis recently featured a great story on River Bluff Industries. The segment noted the River Bluff’s location, the picturesque town of Hermann, and stated, “...there’s a place where the work being done inside is as beautiful as the view outside.”

Muriel Brison, workshop director, is quoted as saying that River Bluff is the second oldest industry in Hermann. Since 1979, employees at River Bluff Industries have had a hand in creating countless products, from packaging table legs to assembling cots for daycare centers. They also operate a thrift store and provide laundry service for several local B&Bs.

This flexibility is critical to staying in business and providing a purpose for employees. “We like to concentrate on showing people our capabilities, rather than our disabilities,” Brison says. The workshop provides employment for 22 residents from throughout Gasconade County. The full video can be seen at www.ksdk.com/story/news/2013/10/20/3138471/

Busy Fall for Marshfield Workshop

WEB Co Custom Industries, Marshfield, has experienced a busy fall season.

General manager Mike Frazier said the shop has added new production business and with product packing lines and sub-contracting kitting lines, the Recycling Department is growing. The department is also becoming more productive and efficient due to these improvements, which have allowed the shop to increase its workforce.

The workshop also had a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner, and one of the servers was state Representative Lyndal Fraker, District 137. Due to some gracious donors, the shop was also able to give out hams to each employee for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Delays Trouble Workshops

Managers of at least two Missouri workshops recently reported frustration with a state office responsible for grants that are often used to purchase vehicles.

Diane Arnold of Manufacturers Assistance Group (MAG) and Laura Johnson of Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop recently wrote that without the support, they would be forced to use trucks and busses that have outlived their service length.

“We applied for replacement vehicles in the 2011 Section 5310 grant process,” Arnold said. “These vehicles should have been delivered in 2012.” The vehicles are a transportation program administered by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT).

Arnold said that she has been involved in the grant process for 25 years, and it has been smooth until recently. “Transportation is vital to the success of our sheltered workshop,” Arnold noted. “The vehicles we have asked them to replace are eight and 10 years old. They are eligible for replacement after five years. At this point, we are unsure of whether we should invest the time to apply for further replacement vehicles.”

Johnson said Pulaski County has the same problems. “We applied for new buses this year or last and were told it would be four years. Unfortunately our buses are not going to last four years. Once they hit 100,000 miles, they just started falling apart.”

DOL Calculators Available Online for Service Providers

As of Nov. 14, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is publishing calculators on its website to assist employers using Sec 14(c). The calculators help in determining prevailing rates, adjusting prevailing rates for increases in state minimum wages and establishing commensurate hourly rates and piece rates.

These calculators do not change any rules or regulations, but they may help ensure employers that they have determined prevailing rates and commensurate wages in a way that will meet DOL requirements. The notice and links can be found at: www.dol.gov/whd/sec14c/calculators/

Minimum Wage Increases in Missouri

Missouri’s minimum wage rose to $7.50 an hour Jan. 1 due to an inflation adjustment built into state law.

In Kansas, the wage for covered employers and employees will stay at $7.25 an hour, the federal rate. Federal law ultimately could impact both. Congress is considering the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2013 that would raise the national rate to $10.10 by 2015, with three increases of 95 cents each.

Missouri’s increase stems from a voter-approved initiative in 2006 that calls for annual rate adjustments reflecting cost-of-living increases. Like Missouri, 10 other states have indexed their minimums to annual inflation changes.

Council Offers Info

The Governor’s Council website portal offers a wide range of online resources for consumers, parents and guardians and professionals serving those with disabilities.

Located at www.disability.mo.gov/gcd/, the site not only offers extensive materials but also educational seminars and on-site training.

Also available are a legislative newsletter, a resource directory and informational brochures on topics relating to people with disabilities.