

MASWM

Dignified and meaningful employment for people with disabilities...Quality services for Missouri.

50 Years of Success, 50 Years of Challenge

by MASWM President Bruce Young

Over the last 50 years, Missouri's Extended Employment program has provided meaningful work opportunities to thousands of adults with the most significant disabilities.

Most of these hardworking, extremely dedicated Missourians would have never had an opportunity to work and be productive citizens within their communities had it not been for the Extended Employment program. Their alternative was to sit at home or participate in much more restrictive, costly and nonproductive day programs that rely 100 percent on government subsidies. Working and contributing to one's community is important to everyone by giving people purpose, dignity and self-esteem, as well as a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Today, Missouri's extended employment program, along with others from around the nation, is facing an extremely vocal and well-financed group of adver-

saries, who are doing everything they can to eliminate this employment option. Choice of employment just doesn't seem to be a subject of concern for this group. Federal mandates such as the Work Innovative Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Time ACT also contain items that threaten to limit the choice of extended employment for adults with the most significant disabilities.

In response to these threats, MASWM's membership voted unanimously at its annual meeting in April to establish a committee, "ACCSES Missouri." ACCSES Missouri is charged with mounting a nationwide campaign to save sheltered workshops as an option of employment for people who otherwise would not have an opportunity to work. Eighteen workshop managers volunteered to serve on this very important committee. Since the April meeting, these volunteers have participated in five statewide meetings to help mount this

campaign, so that people with the most significant disabilities throughout this nation will continue to have some choice as to where they want to work. One important recommendation from this committee included the partnership with the

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MASWM President Bruce Young sees more challenge for workshops serving people with developmental disabilities.

Committee Works on Critical Issues Facing Workshops

MASWM's WIOA/ACCSES Committee is working on many fronts to counter recommendations in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Nearly every supporter of workshops and broad opportunities for people with disabilities, including ACCSES, believes that federal rules slated to become law in July will be detrimental to people with the most severe disabilities and their ability to get employment under section 14(C) of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The most egregious aspects of the proposed rules put additional restrictions on

employment by mandating integration within not only the community, but also within what is defined as the "work unit." To meet the "work unit" mandates, individuals with disabilities would be terminated and replaced by nondisabled employees to ensure the ideal of integration. As with other proposals, some of the most adversely affected may be those with the most significant disabilities.

MASWM's efforts in these areas include everything from helping individual shop managers to working with national organizations like ACCSES. A subcom-

mittee of the ACCSES Committee is also cooperating with the Porter Group of Washington, D.C., in order to better communicate the workshop story on a nationwide basis.

Former U.S. Congressman Jon C. Porter and his son Chris agreed managers should take these threats seriously. "It's a very serious threat," Chris said. "Workshops have gotten a bad rap and the members of the anti-14(C) crowd have done a good job of getting their opinion out. We need to do anything and every-

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Committee Works on Critical Issues Facing Workshops

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thing to get our message out.”

That has already begun. Flying back from a May meeting in Liberty, the Porters talked to Congressman Sam Graves (R-6) and later communicated with Senator Roy Blunt. They were also active in organizing Missouri Day on the Hill in Washington, D.C., July 14, a full day of activities on and around the Capitol.

MASWM

Officers

President Bruce Young Columbia (573) 442-6935 cmsebruce@aol.com

Vice President Aaron Martin Independence (816) 796-7070 amartin@job1one.org

Secretary Ginger Williams Farmington (573) 756-6406 ginger@mciifarmington.com

Treasurer Robert Greenwood Harrisonville (816) 380-7359 robert@casco-aw.org

Past President Brent Blackwell Carrollton (660) 542-1401 brent.blackwell@att.net

Board of Directors

Area I Susan Legaard Bethany (660)425-6300 hcsww@grm.net

Area II Brian Hogan Kansas City (816) 483-1620 bhogan@bvinds.org

Area III Pamela Martin (660) 679-3667 batescountyindustries@gmail.com

Area IV Judd Chesnut Lamar (417) 682-3506 lsw.inc@outlook.com

Area V Kit Brewer Moberly, (660) 263-6202 Fax: (660) 263-0773 kbrewer@icanmo.org

Area VI C.J. Welch Boonville (660) 882-5576 cj@uoi.org

Area VII Tami Bock Jefferson City (573) 634-3660 cpinc@socket.net

Area VIII Courtney Murphy Pomona (417) 257-1550 cjmosi@centurytel.net

Area IX Mike Stroud St. Louis (314) 773-3200 mike.stroud@industrialaid.com

Area X Jeff Arnold Poplar Bluff (573) 785-1624 jmag@mycitycable.co

Mission

Sheltered Workshops in Missouri share a common mission of providing dignified and meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

If you have questions regarding the Missouri Association of Sheltered Workshop Managers, please contact: Legislative Co-Chairs Randy Hylton at (816) 781-6292 or e-mail rhyllton@vsiserve.org; Jim Guyre, 314-583-1125 or Jim.Guyre@ValleyInd.net; or President Brent Blackwell at (660) 542-1401 or brent.blackwell@att.net.

Jon Porter noted that one challenge faced by workshops is the sheer complexity of employment opportunities, commensurate wages and other issues that don't fit well into sound bites. Even if money were available to increase wages, for example, the raises would cause many workers with disabilities to lose their health care, housing and other supports that would cost far more than the raises.

“It is complicated,” Jon said. “That’s one reason it’s paramount that workshop friends create a bond with officials and communicate the human side of this.”

Both Porter’s marveled at the chal-

lenges facing workshops. “We appreciate it when managers are running a business, taking care of families, and especially people with disabilities, I don’t know how they do it,” Jon said.

ACCSES Committee members agreed that all of these issues mean the July 21-22 MASWM meeting will be extremely important.

More information is also available on these websites:

- <https://www.facebook.com/whatmattersmostcampaign/>
- <http://www.acces.org/home>
- <http://www.wmmcampaign.org>



Meetings like this subcommittee in May have been taking place all over Missouri as part of MASWM’s efforts to deal constructively with major challenges.

Workshops Face Both Success and Challenge

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Porter Group in order to establish a voice in Washington DC.

Over the course of the last 50 years, Missouri’s Extended Employment programs have seen many changes. Manufacturing, which comprised over 65 percent of the nation’s workforce in the 1960s, is now below 17 percent of the workforce. As a result, Missouri’s Extended Employment programs have been forced to adapt by developing their own businesses such as recycling, secondhand shops and greenhouses. Many have also developed other programs such as job training, community employment and other progressive programs to assist their employees to grow and be the very best that they possibly can.

All of this resulted in a request to present the Missouri Model at the annual ACCSES conference on July 10-13 in

Washington, D.C. Missouri’s Extended Employment program is suddenly poised to become a model program for the entire nation. And to make sure managers are even busier, we’re also holding Missouri Day on the Hill so managers and supporters can visit with their federal representatives July 14.

In order to make this happen, we must begin to move forward and show the nation that Missouri’s program is a flexible one that provides every opportunity to its employees to obtain the skills and abilities to work successfully wherever they may choose to work. Exploring and expanding innovative programs for our employees such as person centered planning, job training and community employment will most certainly help our efforts toward a well-defined program that maximizes employment options for the most significantly disabled.

Parents and Guardians: Please Don't Close Our Workshops

Parents, Guardians Know Value of Workshops Firsthand

For parents and others who have found workshops a miracle for their adult children with disabilities, the possibility that workshops would be removed represents a nightmare. Some of these parents, guardians and others remember the dark days before workshops were created. They know from experience that idealistic plans for widespread community employment or expensive alternatives won't work, at least not to the extent needed to provide for nearly 8,000 people in Missouri and hundreds of thousands nationally.

"I ask that you please reconsider your support of any policies that negatively affect individuals like Tara, who have disabilities and work at the sheltered workshop," wrote Tanya Ellwood, whose daughter works at Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop. "So please don't take away their jobs and happiness. I've seen firsthand how this wonderful place is a good thing for all of them."

In St. Louis, a woman is guardian for her sister who works at Empac. She stressed that safety for people with disabilities cannot be ensured in many envi-

ronments, one of the reasons workshops were created in the first place. "People like my sister need somewhere to go that they feel safe and feel they are making a contribution," she said. "She comes home each day and is anxious to tell me about the jobs she has worked on, especially new jobs she has done. I hope that programs like EMPAC will be able to continue. They serve an important part in giving people like my sister a sense of worth."

Becki Long-Ruggles, M.Ed. LPC, has consulted with workshops and is also guardian for her nephew, who works at a Missouri workshop. "I want him to be able to have a place to go each day, a place to be proud of his work and the new skills that he is learning." She noted that the alternative would be a few hours a day in a job that wouldn't challenge him.

Just in Missouri, thousands of families face these nightmarish issues if workshops are closed. In states where workshops have closed, up to three-fourths of those with disabilities, usually those with the most severe disabilities, are unable to find alternatives and often end up returning to home, which causes a cascade of

other problems for families that support them.

U.S. Congressman Bill Long (R-7), who cited several successes at Southwest Industries workshop in Springfield, recently shared dramatic parent testimony. Congressman Long concluded that well-meaning proposals to eliminate workshops are ill considered.

"They told me the story of a young woman named Mary who had never held a competitive job but began helping SWI employees with small tasks in production and janitorial services," he reported. "As she improved in the workplace, her SWI Job Developer was able to help her find employment at her dream job of working with animals, and she now lives in her own apartment and has worked at a veterinarian clinic for over four years."

Debbie Huit's son is 26 years old and has been working at Valley Industries in Hazelwood for almost five years. "This company has been good for my son and I don't know where he would work if this Sheltered Workshop would close," she said. "My husband and I both work and could not be home with my son. He can't work in a competitive job. He has autism. Please don't close the workshop."

Shop Aids Behind-the-Scene Effort To Promote Job Growth

Joplin Workshops was pleased to host the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) of Southwest Missouri on June 21 for their bimonthly meeting.

This regional group is tasked with ensuring that all of the workers in their seven-county region are equipped with the appropriate skills to secure the jobs specific to their area.

Board members include representatives from all sectors of the community, including manufacturing, building trades, education, vocational rehabilitation, economic development, banking, family support services, communications, utilities, transportation, recycling and more.

JWI Manager Susan Adams has served on the SW MO WIB for 10 years and is the incoming chair.

The SWMO WIB will be sponsoring a summit on employment for people with disabilities in the fall of 2016. There are WIBs in every region of Missouri, and

they are busy, behind the scenes, keeping

our communities working and strong.



Joplin Workshops recently hosted a regional Workforce Investment Board meeting. With workshop Manager Susan Adams as the board's incoming chair, the group is helping to prepare the region's workers for jobs of the future.

Thrift Stores a Big Asset to Workshops and Communities

Thrift stores, greenhouses and other retail outlets have become big business for workshops seeking creative ways to augment their traditional services of packaging, assembly and similar outsourcing efforts.

Retail stores bring several benefits, including a variety of new employment options for people with disabilities, increased opportunity for original products manufactured in the workshop and more. Perhaps best of all, they put workshops in direct contact with their communities.

Valley Industries in Hazelwood is a good example. Their thrift store has become a resounding success for the workshop. Although it is located in a mostly industrial part of Hazelwood and away from shopping areas, it's proven the movie line, "If you build it, they will come."

During the economic downturn in 2009, the contract packaging services offered by Valley Industries were not being utilized as much as they had been in the previous years. Many companies kept the work for themselves or were sold, and many other businesses were forced to close. In an effort to keep Valley workers employed and to not participate in a recession, a staff member suggested having a rummage sale.

The sale was a great success, so another was planned soon after. More and more donations for sales kept arriving, volunteers started rolling up their sleeves and the Valley Industries Thrift Store was born, opening only on Wednesdays for the first year. The last several years, it has gained in popularity, enabling it to be open five days a week and last year serving over 11,000 customers!

Like other workshop thrift stores, Valley Industries' success brought a need for expansion, which was completed last year with volunteer labor from Scott Beckett of BBI Constructors, as well as donations from the Rotary Club of Florissant, Margaret and Chuck Gunn and Don Ceresia, among others.

The thrift store receives donations of inventory from the community, and some of its customers have been very generous with donations. These donations are processed by the workers with developmental disabilities and a generous team of volunteers who do an excellent job of merchandising the store.

Through the hard work of the many volunteers and donors, the Valley Industries' Thrift Store has become a popular shopping destination and a great community outreach for Valley Industries, as well as a wonderful source of employment for its workers with developmental



Thrift stores have become an important additional source of revenue for many workshops in Missouri, including this one operated by Valley Industries in Hazelwood. But as important as is the income, another benefit is significant as well: interaction between the community and workers with developmental disabilities.

disabilities. It has provided its workers an opportunity to interact with and get to know customers, while providing the community an opportunity to meet some of the incredible workers of Valley Industries.

Workshop Celebrates Bill Increasing Limits

On June 9, employees of VIP Industries of Cape Girardeau attended a community meeting with Gov. Jay Nixon for the signing of House Bill No. 1565.



Celebrating the signing of House Bill No. 1565 were (from left) employees of VIP Industries Steve Vogelsang and Dennis Heuring, along with Gov. Jay Nixon, Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, and Sen. Wayne Wallingford.

The meeting was held in the Cape Girardeau County Commission chambers in Jackson. All three county commissioners, Clint Tracy, Paul Koeper and Charles Herbst, along with state Senator Wayne Wallingford, Representative Donna Lichtenegger and members of the County Board for Developmentally Disabled and other interested community providers, caregivers and recipients were present.

Under this new law, the limit of assets will increase for individuals with disabilities. Starting in July 2017, the limit will increase \$1,000 for individuals and \$2,000 for couples until the respective limits reach \$5,000 and \$10,000 by fiscal year 2021.

Managers Step Forward to Help Lead MASWM

Several new faces have joined the ranks of MASWM leadership, managers who have volunteered to navigate what is one of the most challenging periods ever for extended employment organizations.

In April, then President Brent Blackwell appointed Tami Bock to fill Lon Little's position as Area VII Director and Mike Stroud to fill Dave Orr's position as Area IX Director.

In May, new President Bruce Young announced that Brian Hogan had agreed to serve as Area II Director, which was previously held by Aaron Martin.

MASWM Organizes “Day on the Hill” To Send A Message

By the time you read this, Missouri Day on the Hill scheduled for July 14 will be history.

The effort was comprised of a full day of activities on and around the U.S. Capitol arranged by the Porter Group, national legislative consultants who are working with MASWM in its efforts to communicate workshop issues and recent

legislative changes. During the event, managers and other guests met with members of Missouri’s Federal Delegation and staff and visited with them about their concerns for the future of Extended Employment Sheltered Workshops in Missouri. The program is part of MASWM’s efforts to have an impact on the onerous WIOA regulations that

will be implemented as soon as July 22. Missouri Day on the Hill was organized as an opportunity to visit with the Missouri Federal Delegation and bring the truth about WIOA and the negative impact that it could have on Missouri workshops.

Updates Include New Managers, Contact Information

JW Gibbs is the new general manager at SWI Industrial Solutions, Springfield. Gibbs succeeds John Foley, who retired March 31.

Gibbs brings extensive leadership experience in operations, business management, as well as financial and health services industries. Foley noted, “I’m leaving SWI in good hands, as JW brings the right balance of leadership, marketing and community involvement.”

Marla Nelson is the workshop operations manager at the Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City. Her email is Marla.Nelson@rehabkc.org.

Laura (Johnson) Miller is general manager for Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop in Richland. Her email is pcsw765@outlook.com.

Susan Adams is general manager at Joplin Workshops, Inc. The workshop phone is (417) 781-2862, and its website is www.jworkshops.com. Susan’s email is susan.adams@jworkshops.com.

Tony Spielberg is now manager at Boone Center, Inc. in St. Peters. The workshop phone is (636) 978-4300, and the website is www.boonecenter.com. Tony’s email is tspielberg@bcipackaging.com.

Mike Cook is the career impact manager at Goodwill of Western Missouri and Eastern Kansas, and Tonya Keightley is the vice president of Mission Operations. Located in Kansas City, the workshop phone is (816) 830-0798, and the

website is www.mokangoodwill.org.

C.J. Welch is director of Boonslick Industries, Boonville. His email is cj.welch@uoi.org.

Director of Capitol Projects, Inc. in Jefferson City is Tami Bock. Her email is cpinc@socket.net.

Dorothy Johnson at Big Spring Springs Sheltered Workshop in Van Buren has a new email address: big009@centurytel.net.

State Approves Full Funding for 2017

Workshop managers and supporters were thrilled with the passage of Missouri HB 2002, which included full funding of extended employment sheltered workshops from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

That funding, which constitutes work-

shop monies, along with contract revenues and county sources, had been significantly reduced for the past eight years. Passage by the legislature and signing by the governor of the fiscal year 2017 funding represented a significant step for all of Missouri’s workshops.



Capitol Projects’ employees and staff recently wore their new company t-shirts. A private donation was made to the workshop by the sister of a past employees whose family has been a huge advocate of Capitol Projects for many years. Staff created the design, with the back of the shirt displaying the silhouette of several people holding a banner with the word “Teamwork” printed on it. They decided that it was the perfect word to capture the spirit of the employees’ work ethic at Capitol Projects.

28-Year Career Underscores Workshop Commitment

Tom Barratt, director of Sales at Boone Center, Inc. will be retiring in July after 28 years.

Tom's service with BCI began in 1988, after leaving the construction industry to develop a career in sales. He has since played a pivotal role in driving the growth of the organization. "In my first year, BCI had about 125 employees," said Tom. Today, BCI employs nearly 300 adults with disabilities who are supported by the business relationships that Tom has helped to develop over the years.

BCI works to find a healthy balance between their social and business missions, and Tom has incorporated this into his work ethic. "Tom took time to get to know customers, suppliers, employees and all BCI stakeholders as individuals", says Susan Paulus, BCI's Vice President

of Operations and Quality.

When asked to explain BCI's success, he replied "Our growth is due to our people; no one will outwork them." In his time with BCI, Tom has consistently demonstrated his commitment to the mission of providing adults with disabilities a choice of meaningful employment, and he attributes his dedication to the inspiration he gets from observing the way these individuals care unconditionally for others. He has cited this as the most vivid memory that he will carry from his experience at BCI.

Additionally, Tom has also helped to develop sales team members who will be continuing the work he started, ensuring BCI's continued success. While he is retiring, he will continue to assist the sales team during this time of transition remotely from Ft. Meyer's, FL. Tom will be



Boone Center's Tom Barratt is retiring after 28 years of service. He's been instrumental in developing programs to employ people with disabilities and has developed wonderful relationships with them.

well remembered and deeply missed; however, we wish him well in his next chapter.

Nashville Artist Visits Workshop

Nashville recording artist Brian Collins visited and performed at Opportunity Sheltered Industries, Inc. in Houston on May 12.

Workshop employees had made hats that were similar to the one Brian wore. He signed autographs and posed for many photographs!

This was obviously an event everyone enjoyed!



Council Honors Shop

The Independence Economic Development Council in Independence, Missouri recently awarded nonprofit agency JobOne with its Nonprofit of the Year Award during its eighth annual business awards luncheon. The award recognizes local businesses that have made a positive economic impact during the past year. JobOne employs nearly 300 people with disabilities in Jackson County, Missouri and the surrounding Kansas City metro area.



Area Residents, Leaders Honored at Community Awards Night

Even with honors to a wide range of area residents and leaders, a big highlight of the June 23 Vocational Services Community Awards Night was celebration of the organization's 50th anniversary.

Held in Kansas City, the event featured a silent auction and celebration of VSI's efforts since 1966 providing employment and other opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Even as workshops nationwide face legal and financial challenge, VSI has continued to serve more than 250 Northland residents with developmental disabilities. More than 300 people attended the event.

The first to be recognized was Consumer of the Year Iris Stites. Joining VSI in 1976, she began at VSI's North Kansas City location before transferring to Liberty where she has been employed in the workshop as well as with crews working at Mainstay Suites and the Clay County Courthouse. She also volunteered at Martha Laffite Nature Sanctuary and with Meals on Wheels. In 2015, after 39 years of employment, she accepted a position in the community as part of VSI's Supported Employment Program.

Also recognized were retiring consumers John Branham, George Soper, Barbara Jo Warren, Cheryl Radford, Cynthia Radford and Donald Tweeddale.

Parent Vickie Cross received the Parent/Guardian of the Year Award for her



Vocational Services, Inc., celebrated 50 years of service during their Community Awards Night event June 23. Cutting the anniversary cake were (from left) board members Richard Hubbard, Cynthia Gassen, Bill Welliver, Paula Torkelson, Bill Quigley and Adam Moyers along with Executive Director Randy Hylton.

extensive work and support with VSI. The mother of a son employed at VSI, she has contributed to numerous VSI events and has become an outstanding spokesperson for those with disabilities. She is currently a member of the board of directors for the Arc of Clay and Platte Counties.

Krueger and James Insurance Agency was honored with VSI Vendor of the Year honors while R.R. Donnelley received the VSI Customer of the Year Award. Two companies were recognized for hiring VSI employees through the Supported Employment Program: McDonald's near 96th and McGee in Clay County and Oppa! Food Manage-

ment in Platte County. Kristy Coleman and Melissa Martin accepted for McDonald's and Manager Chris Dressler for Oppa.

The Platte County Board of Services was recognized as Benefactor of the Year for their longtime support.

State Representative Kurt Schaefer (R-Columbia) was recognized as Legislator of the Year for his extensive service to workshops across the state. The Working for the Public Good award went to Clay County Public Administrator Debbie Gwin, who has also earned state and national honors for her dedication.

50th Anniversary



Larry Terrell, treasurer for Manufacturer's Assistance Group in Poplar Bluff, recently burned a copy of the original USDA loan used to build the workshop in 2007. The ceremony was part of the workshops' recent 50th anniversary. Among those present at the celebration were (from left) Jeff Arnold, managing director of MAG; Dianne Arnold, operations manager; Dan Gier, technical field supervisor for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Sheltered Workshop Section; Elaine Libla; and Senator Doug Libla.

Programs Place Workshop Employees In Their Communities

With names ranging from “supported” to “community” employment, Missouri workshops have for years offered carefully designed programs that have workers with disabilities working at community job sites operated by private companies or other nonprofit organizations.

The programs are often called “supported” because of the assistance provided by the workshop to help the employee get started and ensure smooth long-term success. Workers may need help with specific job skills or even locating businesses that work in fields in which they are interested. If there are transportation or on-the-job issues, the “follow-along” staff provided by the workshop help with solutions so the worker with disabilities keeps his or her job or, if needed, finds a new one.

For decades, The Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City has operated two employment services programs, its Rehabilitation Institute Industries workshop and its Community Employment. As with many Missouri operations, both work in close conjunction with each other. Workshop employees often learn skills that can provide the foundation for more competitive community programs. In some cases, workers with disabilities find that community employment is not a good fit and still have the workshop option.

In 2015, RIKC’s employment services



Many of Missouri’s workshops operate community or “supported” employment programs in which workers with disabilities are placed in competitive jobs. Often a little help gets them started in longterm positions. The smile on this employee in JobOne’s Careers program is a good indication of these successes.

department provided community supported employment services to 280 participants, with some of these individuals coming from its sheltered workshop program. There is a long history of participants in RIKC’s sheltered employment choosing to work in some type of community employment setting.

The program manager visits annually with all workshop participants to gauge which ones are interested and qualified to enter into supported employment. The manager will then assist the participants in making application to the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for services.

On average, there have been approximately five to six workshop participants who have opted to transfer from the sheltered workshop program to community supported employment for the past several years. About one third of those individuals are successful and remain in their community employment, while the other two-thirds may opt to return to their sheltered employment. Throughout the decades of operation, RIKC’s sheltered employment programs have seen that many of the participants who have left

the program to enter into community supported employment return on their own volition because they miss their friends, staff and work environment.

Not far away, one of the newest such programs is JobOne Careers, a customized employment service launched in 2014. In less than two years, the program has grown tremendously. Careers currently employs four customized employment specialists who have served nearly 60 people with disabilities.

The program’s unique design ensures that an individual seeking a job works with the same staff member throughout the process. This has earned high marks from VR and the people being served. Careers is providing a new way for JobOne to help existing employees and those who might not have considered working with JobOne in the past. JobOne believes strongly in employment choices, and Careers is one option of many for people with disabilities. It complements their extended employment services well, and all staff members are excited about the potential for further growth and innovation.



U.S. Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler recently visited Web-Co Custom Industries in Marshfield. Joining Congresswoman Hartzler on the tour was Mike Frazier, Web-Co general manager and Rob Ahrens, Board President. The congresswoman talked with some of the 85 special needs individuals who package and label goods, in addition to recycling products.