

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

Workshop Passion Brings “Two for the Price of One”

by Bill Barr, MASWM President

Welcome to the first 2011 newsletter of the Missouri Association of Sheltered Workshop Managers. All of us connected with Missouri workshops are excited about the coming year, even as we increase our efforts to meet growing challenges.

As you will see from the articles in this publication, Missouri workshops are not standing still. They continue to increase creative business efforts with new products and services. These include greenhouses, imaginative business partnerships, successful retail outlets and the aggressive use of programs such as tax credits to “bootstrap” opportunities. Every day, workshops expand the tools they use to keep operating and keep providing job opportunities for Missourians with developmental disabilities.

In this sense, workshops are like the most successful businesses in Missouri. In order to keep the doors open, they look for every means to save money and simultaneously make investments to expand services and grow. As any businessman or woman knows, it's never easy.

Workshops have additional challenges, however. I'm reminded of a manager who was busy preparing a highly competitive bid for packaging services to a large national corporation. If won, the contract would mean tens of thousands of dollars of work over the next year. It's the kind of white-knuckle task that most competitive business operators love and hate.

In the midst of preparing the bid, this manager had an interruption. One of her workshop's consumers—a person with several disabilities—suffered a seizure. Already shorthanded, the manager set aside the bid and took care of the emergency. Both efforts had a happy ending—the consumer later returned to his job and the workshop won the bid—but the “excitement” was telling.

Many business owners experience personnel emergencies, but the level of involvement at Missouri's workshops is

intense by almost any standard. The “business” of Missouri's workshops includes a wide range of services for Missourians with disabilities.

Workshops are literally a “two for the price of one” bargain where job opportunities are accompanied by a vast array of programs in areas such as school-to-work, habilitation and community integration.

It's no wonder that workshop supporters have historically been so passionate. It's a good thing they are; they have a big job to do!

Workshop Earns State Honor

Opportunity Workshop, Inc. in Stanberry received the Missouri Governor's Community Project of the Year Award in September.

Presented at the Governor's Conference on Economic Development, the honor recognized the best example of community development projects providing a significant impact on the community and its citizens. The ceremony was at the University Plaza Hotel and Convention Center in Springfield.

The honor was given in connection with construction of a new, ADA-accessible production facility that provides a safer, healthier, uncluttered work environment for its employees. The facility enabled Opportunity Workshop to increase its number of employees with a disability.



Missouri Governor Jay Nixon presented the 2010 Governor's Community Project of the Year Award to Manager Tom Miller of Opportunity Workshop.

Inside this Issue:

New Business Counters Loss	2	Business “Planted” in Camdenton	4	Legislative Efforts	6
Major Changes at DESE	3	St. Louis Workshop Draws Crowd	4	Visitors From Around the World	7
Joplin Partnership Grows Green	3	Thrift Shop Marks Six-Year Success	5	MASWM Works With National Group	7
		Grants Help Workshop Grow	6	Creative Efforts in Clay County	8

MASWM
P.O. Box 1247
Jefferson City, MO 65102
www.moworkshops.org

Workshop Starts New Business To Counter Loss of Old

In the spring of 2009 Bruce Young, director of Central Missouri

MASWM

Officers

President Bill Barr, Camdenton
(573) 346-7934
bill@lakeareaindustries.org

Vice President Bob Koch, Washington
(636) 239-2744 bkoch@shelteredworkshopsinc.org

Secretary Bob Engemann, Marthasville
(636) 433-2335 retemco@gmail.com

Treasurer, Dee Froneyberger, St. Louis
(314) 487-7200 dee@wacindustries.com

Past President Stan Shurmantine, Independence
(816) 796-7070 stan.shurmantine@ibsindustries.com

Board of Directors

Area I Tom Miller, Stanberry
(660) 783-2093 OWI@JagTec.net

Area II Aaron Martin, Grandview
(816) 763-7822
amartin@foundationworkshop.org

Area III Brent Blackwell, Higginsville
(660)-584-7232 lafoent@ctcis.net

Area IV Judd Chesnut, Lamar
(417) 682-3506 lswinc08@yahoo.com

Area V Connie Thurman, Monroe City
(573) 735-4751
shelteredwork@centurytel.net

Area VI Bruce Young, Columbia
(573) 442-6935 cmsebruce@aol.com

Area VII Eric Giebler, Sullivan
(573) 468-3888 egiebler@simvinc.com

Area VIII Sharon Tyger, Houston
(417) 967-3608
opportunity@centurytel.net

Area IX Jim Guyre, Hazelwood
(314) 731-1771
jim@valleyind.net

Area X Harvey Cooper, Sikeston
(573) 472-0598
comshelter@sbcglobal.net

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: Richard "Mo" McCullough, (573) 619-1482 or at work through mscamo@embarqmail.com; or President Barr: Phone: (573) 36-7934, Fax: (573) 346-1214, E-mail: bill@lakeareaindustries.org.

Subcontracting Enterprises (CMSE) in Columbia, received bad news from one of their largest contract providers. The company was pulling their contracted work in-house to keep their own employees busy. This action created a significant loss of work and revenue for the Columbia sheltered workshop. CMSE found itself in a real dilemma with regard to maintaining their workforce of more than 120 production employees and 17 supervisory staff.

Soon after, Young was having breakfast with fellow Rotarian Bill Regan when the conversation turned to the predicament CMSE was facing. Regan, with a master's degree in horticulture and 30 years of experience in the horticulture business, had an idea: start a retail nursery where employees would grow and sell high quality bedding and vegetable plants.

After many hours of research and planning, the Board of Directors of CMSE gave the green light to move ahead with this project. In December 2009, CMSE began breaking ground on the site that would be the first pair of greenhouses. With help from ABC Laboratories and the University of Missouri's Journalism Masters, CMSE opened the doors to Giving Gardens in April.

CMSE currently uses their two greenhouses to grow a wide array of annual and perennial plants for flowerbeds and vegetable gardens. Since opening, CMSE sales have exceeded \$100,000 and public support has been overwhelming. Repeat customers throughout the spring, summer and fall confirmed that CMSE was providing a good product at competitive prices.

This fall, with very little advertising, CMSE was able to sell nearly every one of the 1,800 mums that were grown in the late summer. Likewise, during fall and winter, CMSE has been able to produce and sell tomatoes and cucumbers to several restaurants, as well as the public allowing the greenhouses to be fully utilized throughout the year. Currently, CMSE is winding down their produce production and preparing to begin their spring planting.

Thanks to Bill Regan, CMSE Board of Directors, Bruce Young, University of Missouri School of Journalism, ABC Laboratories, the staff of CMSE, Friends and Families of CMSE employees and the support of the community, CMSE has been able to hire additional production employees and given the Sheltered Workshop a renewed sense of hope for the future.



Central Missouri Subcontracting Enterprises in Columbia fought loss of business by opening a new greenhouse operation that has already proven to be a major success.

Significant Changes Face Workshops, DESE

By Fulvio Franzì
Director, DESE Special Education
Sheltered Workshops

There have been several significant changes at the Department and at the Office of Special Education.

One of the most dramatic occurred when Dec. 1, 2010, when Heidi Atkins-Lieberman resigned her position as Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Special Education to take a position as a partner in a law firm. Heidi has been a staunch supporter of the workshops and students with disabilities while at the Department and she will be missed by all.

On Dec. 15, Commissioner of Education Chris L. Nicastro announced the appointment of Dr. Stephen Barr as the Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Special Education. Dr. Barr, a former teacher and school administrator in eastern Missouri schools, received his doctorate in education administration from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He originally joined the Department in 1984 as coordinator of federal programs after years of experience as teacher and school administrator. He later served as Assistant Commissioner of Special Education until 2002, when he took a leadership position in school improvement at the Ohio Department of Education. Dr. Barr returned to Missouri earlier this year to oversee the state's federal education programs. The Office of Special Education administers state and federal funds to support services for students and adults with disabilities.

The Missouri Sheltered Workshops have seen significant changes as well. Many of these changes are the direct effects of current economic conditions and funding streams. The primary changes have occurred in the volume and type of work the Workshops can attract and obtain from private industry to support the 50-70 percent of the dollars needed to finance the total operations. The principal cause for the decline of opportunities is the loss of the labor intensive/manual work that has gone to other parts of the world.

There are several signs that the weak-

*As of December,
the waiting list for workshops had
increased to 978 people with
disabilities.*

ened economy is affecting employment in the Sheltered Workshops. As of June 30, 2010, the ninety-two Sheltered Workshops provided meaningful employment to an average of 7,438 persons with disabilities and had a "waiting to be hired" list of 785 people. As of December 4, 2010, the average number of persons employed is 7,139 while the "waiting to be hired" list has increased to 978 people. Many Workshops have made changes in the types of contracts, work opportunities and operating systems to address this challenge thus reducing the negative impact of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The economic realities have also affected the available level of support

from public sources of funding. After the December payment of state aid support (for November data), there is a balance of \$10,471,910 remaining six (6) months of the fiscal year. The current average request/expenditure per month is \$2,261,502. At the latter rate of request/expenditure, the projection is that there are sufficient funds for approximately four and one-half months out of six months remaining. The latter projection does not reflect changes in attendance due to severe winter weather or other related closures. Each workshop is encouraged to make its own financial analysis and plan to address the possible financial impact to the operation.

Recent information indicates that the Department has submitted a budget request in the same amount as the previous year for the Sheltered Workshop Program. Each organization is encouraged to plan accordingly.

Unique Partnership Brings Green!

Joplin Workshops and the nearby Downstream Casino Resort have partnered in a new soap-recycling program called "Hand in Hand."

By taking used soap products left by Downstream's hotel guests and safely recycling them into new soap kits, the work is creating jobs and a significant "green" effort.

The recycled soap kits are distributed to charitable organizations, such as Tulsa's Catholic Ministries, Joplin's Lafayette House and homeless shelters to provide a helping hand to needy people in our surrounding communities. Downstream selected Joplin Workshops to do the actual recycling work, collecting the unused shampoo, conditioner and bar soaps, and remaking and repackaging them. This provides additional paying work to an important segment of the workshop's adults with disabilities. Joplin Workshops have also handled much of Downstream's hotel laundry services since the hotel opened in 2008.

"I read about another group that

was doing this on a large scale, and sending recycled soap to Africa and disaster sites like Haiti after the earthquake," said John Berrey, chairman of the Quapaw Tribe and Downstream Development Authority. "So, I thought, why not just start doing it ourselves and make it something positive right here in our own communities?"

"We are very excited about it," Ron Sampson, executive director of Joplin Workshops, said. "Not just because the work benefits us, but because as part of the network of great nonprofit groups in this region, we're very pleased that the soap will help numerous individuals through other charities. It's great for everyone."

Sean Harrison, Downstream's public relations manager, said that the goal is to expand the program to bring other hotels from the tri-state area into the fold and provide the "Hand in Hand" soap kits to as many needy people as possible.

Lake Area Industries Plans to Bloom in 2011



Joining Lake Area Industries groundbreaking ceremony for their new garden center called "Gifted Gardens" is (from left, front) Camdenton Mayor Dennis North, SB40 Board member Jan Berry, SB40 Board President Patsy Riley, Lake Area Board President Louis DeVries, County Commissioner Tom Gumm, Camdenton Chamber Board President Tom Williams, Lake Area Industries Director Bill Barr, Lake Area employee Rusty Warnock and members of the Lake Area Chamber, Camdenton Chamber and employees and staff of Lake Area Industries.

Lake Area Industries, Inc, in Camdenton held a groundbreaking ceremony for their new green house building project called "Gifted Gardens." Currently, Lake Area employs 41 people with disabilities and has primarily relied on contract packaging and assembly over the 27 years in business.

The new "Gifted Gardens" will have a retail shop on the property, which is located on North Business Route 5, just 2.5 miles north of the square. Here, customers can purchase a large variety of bedding plants, flowers, hanging baskets and some custom designed potted plants.

Barring any construction delays, the greenhouse will be full of plants by February and the retail shop is scheduled to open to the public on April 1.

Grand Opening Draws Crowd for St. Louis Workshop

WAC Industries celebrated the grand opening of a new workshop at 9727 Green Park Industrial Drive, in South St. Louis County in June.

The opening began with a ribbon cutting ceremony and was done in conjunction with the Fenton, South County, Green Park and Affton Chamber of Commerce. Guests then proceeded inside to listen to brief speeches by elected and appointed leaders including Senate Bill 40 Vice Chairman David Ruecker, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Director Fulvio Franzi, St. Louis County Executive Charlie Dooley, Missouri State Senator Jim Lembke and Missouri State Representative Rick Stream. At the conclusion of the program, guests were treated to tours, music and refreshments in WAC's spacious new facility.

"This grand opening marks a significant milestone in the history of WAC Industries," said Dee Froneberger, WAC executive director. "From our humble beginnings in the basement of St. George's church, to our last address on Mackenzie and here at our current building in the Green Park Industrial Complex, WAC has weathered change



WAC Industries in St. Louis County opened their new facility in ceremonies June 25. Among those speaking after this ribbon cutting were Dee Froneberger, Executive Director WAC Industries; Rick Stream, Missouri State Representative; Fulvio Franzi, Director, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Jim Lembke, Missouri State Senator; David Ruecker, Senate Bill 40 Vice Chairman; Charlie Dooley, St. Louis County Executive; and Ray Karasek Jr., WAC Industries Board President.

and succeeded in a most remarkable manner."

The new address at 9727 Green Park Industrial Drive will enable WAC Industries to employ over 220 skilled workers and features 47,000 square feet

of production and warehouse space. Please make note of WAC Industries updated contact information: (314) 487-7200 or www.wacindustries.com

Surprising Growth Follows Thrift Shop Opening

Savvy Seconds Resale Shop opened its doors December 2004 in Boonville to provide jobs for men and women with disabilities. The shop was also designed to give people in the community a place to donate their gently used clothing, shoes, purses, jewelry and household items, as well as a place to shop for affordable items. The grand opening included a fashion show, which featured people with and without disabilities dressed in Savvy Seconds clothing.

The store has increased in size times since 2004. It was voted 'Best Clothing' and 'Best Thrift Shop' by the readers of the *Boonville Daily News* in 2009 and 2010.

The shop employs 10 men and women with disabilities and has average monthly sales of \$18,000. Workers with disabilities work alongside employees without disabilities to sort donated items, tag and display them in the store, clean the store and run the cash register. All employees, with and without disabilities, meet and greet people who donate items to the store and carry the items into the sorting area. Savvy Seconds has become a favorite shopping spot for people in the mid-Missouri area.

A comment book at the cash register contains hundreds of positive comments from shoppers who appreciate the store's cleanliness, visual displays, large variety of upscale clothing and other items for sale, and positive comments about the integration of employees with disabilities working alongside employees without disabilities.

Employers of disability services from Missouri, Iowa and Kansas have visited the store to learn how the store was developed so that they can use it as a model for their store.

Under the six-year leadership of manager Donna Groves, Savvy Seconds has grown into a premier example of what a community can do to develop jobs with little start-up cost. The Cooper County SB40 Board helped with start up costs, but has not needed to put any funds toward Savvy Seconds for the last three years.



Consumers and staff at Savvy Seconds Resale Shop in Booneville recently celebrated a very successful sixth anniversary.



Booneville's Savvy Seconds was presented with the Cutting Edge award from the Missouri Association of County Developmental Disabilities Services for "programs that are unique, inclusive, person centered, respectful and dignified; lead to more interdependence or independence for people with disabilities, and promote a learning culture in which creativity, innovation and risk taking are supported and where staff feel empowered to provide excellent supports." At the ceremony were Donna Groves, Manager of Savvy Seconds, Vicki McCarrell, Executive Director of Unlimited Opportunities, Inc. and Jennifer Wooldridge, MACDDS President at the MACDDS conference Oct. 15, at the Lodge of Four Seasons.

Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop Receives Grants

Two grants are helping Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop expand its services.

The largest involves \$264,900 in donations that were authorized under the Neighborhood Assistance Program offered by the Department of Economic Development. Manager Linda Gilford said the funds will enable the workshop to buy the cabinet shop located inside this industrial park and move the woodworking shop out of the warehouse into its own building. She noted the operation currently has a waiting list of customers so there will already be a backlog of work when they walk in the door!

Last year, Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop was approved for the 70-percent tax credit. They received dona-

tions in the amount of \$63,000 during the year, but the contributions greatly accelerated as the year's end approached. In October, they received \$7,000 from Neal Novack in St. Louis, \$7,000 from Aaron Novack, and \$26,745 from Robert Catron of Kansas City. In November, they were notified of pledges in the amounts of \$95,000 from Dr. James Leutkemeyer in Jefferson City, \$25,000 from James Watson of St. Robert, \$10,000 from Dennis Stockstill, and \$10,000 from Danny Howlett. By early December, they were only \$20,000 from their goal and completed the entire fundraising by year's end.

Also important was a grant through The Home Depot Foundation

Building Health Communities grant program. The foundation awarded \$1,000 to Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop, which is being used to help build a greenhouse.

"We were delighted to receive a \$1,000 gift card from The Home Depot Foundation to help us build a greenhouse next to our building in Richland" said Linda Gifford, Manager of Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop.

The Home Depot Foundation Building Healthy Communities grant program supports the work that local nonprofit organizations, public schools and other community organizations are doing to improve the physical health of their neighborhoods.

Pulaski County consumers say "thanks" for donations to capital project:

Shop Updates

Manager Charlie Fischer of Canterbury Enterprises Inc. in St. Louis noted he has a new e-mail and the workshop has a new website. His e-mail is cfischer@canterburyinc.org and the website is www.canterburyinc.org.

Enterprises Unlimited in Bolivar is now Polk County Industrial Solutions, a division of Springfield Workshop Inc. Manager Chuck Bailey notes the workshop is at 4450 Airport Road, Bolivar, MO 65613. The phone is 417-777-3801 and the fax is 417-777-3803. The e-mail is polkcounty@springfield-workshop.com.

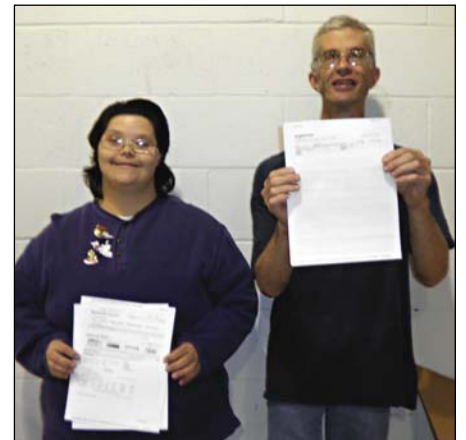
Legislative Efforts

MASWM's efforts to communicate with Missouri legislators and other leaders took on many facets in 2010, not the least of which was informative alerts to MASWM members.

Led by Legislative Chair Randy Hylton, the information ranged from alerts about the Missouri Department of Transportation Transition Plan to November's Proposition C, which involved federal health care reform in Missouri. Hearing dates and locations, copies of proposals and a wide range of informational materials were part of these communications.



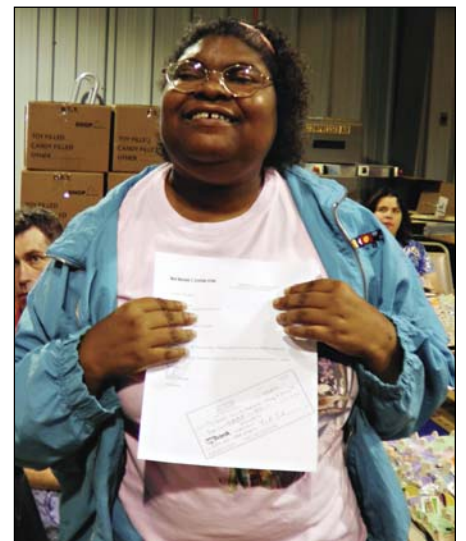
Andrew and Jennifer



Maria and John



Chuck and Tara



Serena

Hazelwood Workshop Hosts Visits from Around the World

Valley Industries in Hazelwood has been popular with visitors recently.

Missouri Representatives Margo McNeil and Bert Atkins, as well as an unusual team from Kuwait, were among the visitors hosted by Executive Director Jim Guyre and the workshop staff.

The first visit occurred in August when Representative McNeil toured Valley Industries and sponsored August Workers of the Month, Dan Mahoney and Mary Wortman. Valley Trainer Glenda Kuykendall was the co-sponsor.

Representative McNeil and Kuykendall helped present the awards, and then Rep. McNeil spoke with the workers on the importance of the workers' jobs to our business community and community at large. She was impressed with their attention to quality and efficiency of the production lines.

The workers asked Rep. McNeil some questions on state government and told her how proud they were to have their jobs and paychecks that they earn at Valley Industries, as well as the gainful productive work each day.

The most unusual visitors to any shop in Missouri may have been a project team from the Middle Eastern nation of Kuwait. The group was composed of researchers for a high-tech corporation that has included researchers who have also been providing support for people with disabilities in Kuwait for 25 years.

They came to the U.S. and Valley Industries to learn about starting and operating a sheltered workshop to help people with developmental disabilities



Glenda Kuykendall, Jim Guyre, Dan Mahoney, Mary Wortman, and State Rep. Margo McNeil gathered at Valley Industries.

in Kuwait become contributing members of society. Their scientific community found the Missouri sheltered workshop program while doing a worldwide search for ways to improve the lives of disabled people in Kuwait. It is a real compliment that they would like to imitate what we have right here in Missouri!

"We were proud to show them our sheltered workshop and thrift store and have some great discussions and information sharing on how to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities," Guyre said.

Later in the year, State Representative Bert Atkins toured Valley Industries to observe our workers in action. He learned first hand of the value of sheltered workshops in the community. Rep. Atkins learned how workshops are



Jim Guyre demonstrated safety equipment to State Rep Bert Atkins while on tour of Valley Industries.



Valley Industries in Hazelwood recently hosted a group from the nation of Kuwait who are researching how to operate sheltered workshops in their country.

a bargain to the taxpayer and return \$3.50 to the community in sales generated for every \$1.00 in state funding received.

MASWM Works with National Organization

MASWM continues to benefit from its connection to ACCSES, which advocates for those with disabilities in Washington.

One of the most significant issues in 2010 involved ongoing debate about section 14c of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which relates directly to workshop salaries for consumers and related regulations. Changes proposed for the act have included some that would negatively impact workshops' ability to provide flexible programming that includes everything from competitive "supported" employment to supervised workshop employment for consumers with a very wide range of abilities.

Also discussed was the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform which has proposed dramatic cuts and changes from Social Security to Medicaid. Also discussed were hearings on ADA regulations and joint efforts with Easter Seals, Goodwill Industries International, the Arc of the United States and United Cerebral Palsy.

Creative Fundraising A Big Part of Workshop Efforts

If you didn't know any better, you would have thought you were in the middle of a Hollywood red carpet event Oct. 23 instead of in North Kansas City at the 14th Annual Vocational Services, Inc. Bowl-a-thon and Silent Auction. More than 200 bowlers, volunteers, spectators and celebrities filled the lanes at the AMF Pro Bowl to raise money and awareness in support of VSI and those they serve.

The theme for this year's event was "Hollywood Bowl-a-thon". Many Hollywood stars were out in full force walking the red carpet and getting their pictures taken. It seemed like every time you turned the corner there was a new celebrity. Everyone from Indiana Jones to the cast of Toy Story were on hand. Fred and Wilma Flintstone and Minnie Mouse also made appearances at the event.

The atmosphere was upbeat as participants hit the lanes challenging each other for high score. There was also rivalry off the lanes as people were out-bidding each other for that must have item at the silent auction. All of the

friendly competition was for a good cause; all proceeds from this event go towards furthering the programs and services provided by VSI.

VSI is not-for-profit organization that has been serving Clay and Platte counties for more than 43 years, providing vocational and rehabilitative services for more than 250 individuals with developmental disabilities. With three sheltered workshops in Liberty and North Kansas City, VSI provides a variety of workshop programs and community employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The programs are designed to help them reach their fullest potential by exercising their rights and participating in the community.

Fundraising for Friends

An even more creative effort at VSI involves the organization's Show-Me Animal Products, which markets first aid kits for pets and horses nationally. The latest initiative by Show-Me involves the new Fundraising For Friends Program, which offers new ways to raise funds and unique opportunities between two not-for-profit organizations.

Show-Me Animal Products is owned and operated by Vocational Services Inc., a sheltered workshop for individuals with disabilities. The Fundraising For Friends Program was designed to provide a unique and cost-effective opportunity for door-to-door, local

events or on the Web.

Here's how it works: As part of the Fundraising For Friends Program, All Show-Me Animal Products are available to registered nonprofit organizations at Show-Me Products' lowest wholesale prices—with no minimum quantity order required.

"We're a non-profit organization and after more than 40 years, we know how important fundraising is," explained Randy Hylton, executive director for VSI and Show-Me. "This is a way we can help other organizations and with our skills and tools, make a real difference."

The first aid kits and Show-Me evolved in 1993 when the need to diversify became evident. A trail accident—where a desperate rider used rags torn to create a makeshift bandage—showed how important quality first aid can be.

The result was an outstanding line of first aid kits for pets and horses. From the original Vet Kit to the newest line of natural kits with the healing power of Amazon rainforest, Show-Me Animal Products has won praise from dog, cat, bird and horse owners, as well as professionals in everything from law enforcement to veterinarians.

For more information about Show-Me Animal Products, call 1-800-831-7245 or visit www.petfirstaid.org on the Internet.



Central Missouri Subcontracting Enterprises successfully opened a greenhouse during 2010 (see related article on Page 2).

VISTA Program Can Help Workshops

Linda Gifford, manager at Pulaski County Sheltered Workshop, recently shared the organization's positive experiences with AmeriCorps VISTA.

"Our workshop gained a VISTA worker for free over a year ago," she explained. "AmeriCorps VISTA provided her a living allowance (\$10,000 per year) and covers her health insurance. At the end of the first year, they paid off \$4,800 of her student loans."

The volunteer worked primarily on marketing the workshop. "Yesterday, her auditors came by for a tour and the director, Mike Laverty, used to be

a job coach for persons with disabilities. He was so impressed with the shop and what our VISTA volunteer has accomplished, he wondered if other workshops would be interested in free workers."

If you get an AmeriCorps worker, he or she can have direct contact with employees. VISTA workers can market, write grants, and recruit volunteers.

For more information, visit www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp.