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Anything is possible at Janus

By Erin Boland
Reporter

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The work done at Janus Developmental Services is not what community members might expect. Janus works with disabled persons, providing valuable training in most, if not all, aspects of daily life—from working a job to doing a load of laundry.

"It's real-life training for them," said Theresa Steege.

On site at the pre-vocational program, the individuals at Janus produce gorgeous birdhouses made from gourds, cat scratching posts, walking sticks (known around the work room as "husband-thumpers"), dog toys, and wind chimes. They fold pill boxes and weld brackets for ceiling lights. They break down, count, palletize, and shrink wrap pizza boxes for Jack's Pizza.

"Everyone here is working and earning a paycheck," said Michael Henry, who runs the pre-vocational program. The program is pre-vocational because it emphasizes skill sets such as being on time and dealing with co-workers for those who aren't quite ready for the workplace.

"This is the only place I've worked where my workforce comes in and hugs me in the morning," Henry said with a smile.

Henry also said it is "refreshing" to have people who want to work and, most importantly, to do that work well.



The Times photo by Steven Furlow
Colorful and unique describe the hand-painted and created bird houses made by clients at Janus Developmental Services and are available for purchase by the public to enhance their homes. The

"It's very important to us that people know because this work is done by people with disabilities it is not substandard in any way," Henry said.

bird houses can be bought from local farmer's markets, the Westfield Antiques Mall and from Janus, in Noblesville.

For those who are ready to go and work in the community, there is the community employment office at Janus, run by Kathie Bowman.

"We go out to the community to find the job that fits what they want to do," Bowman said. The success rate is high, with one lady in particular who has been at her job for 15 years. Ninety-four percent of individuals placed at a job will stay at least 5 years. In the past fiscal year alone, Janus has helped 79 individuals find jobs.

The process of finding those jobs is very involved, with the two job coaches on staff who develop the job, train the individual and follow up on them.

However, finding these jobs is not always easy.

"It's more of a challenge now (because of economic trouble) trying to get these individuals a job," Bowman said.

One of the things that has eased the strain on Janus' job search has been its public transportation. Janus offers transportation to anyone who needs it-they run the Hamilton County Express. Elaine McGuire, who runs the transportation department, said that they have given 40,158 rides and logged 402,000 miles.

All of this would not be possible without the "can-do" team at Janus. According to Connie Sanders, the president and CEO of Janus, a quarter of the staff has been there at least a decade, helping the 1053 families who need Janus' services.

The best part?

"We are here to stay," Sanders said. "We make every penny count." For example, instead of hiring outsiders to remodel a few offices into a conference room, Janus turned it into a project for their clients.

Their seven levels of financial accountability ensure that Janus will continue opening new doors of opportunity for their clients.

For the future, Janus is partnering with Ivy Tech Community college to renovate their Web site, plans on starting an integrated preschool program, and is starting a respite care/wellness program that "Governor Daniels could be proud of".

In August, Janus is sponsoring a "Shake Down the Stars" fundraiser. So far, the guest includes all elected officials in Indiana government up to the Governor's office. For more information on sponsoring and attending the event, contact Melissa Hauger at 773-8781.

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