

CHECK OUT
HANNAH'S
TEENSPEAK
GLOSSARY / P7

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CURRENT IN NOBLESVILLE

Tuesday
January 5, 2010
FREE

Bill Mason intently puts the finishing touches on a painted "lady bug" paperweight which he can sell for profit at Janus Developmental Services in Noblesville.

On the clock

Change in Medicaid policy will shorten time for some Janus clients / P2

Photo by Leslie Webber

How far do you suppose people would go for the right hospital? (Answer on back page.)

 **Community**
Heart and Vascular
eCommunity.com/heart

On the clock

Change in Medicaid policy will shorten time for some Janus clients

By Martha Allan

Current in Noblesville

Bill Mason carefully brushes green paint on a hollowed-out gourd that will be a birdhouse he can sell for profit. Amanda Simpson cheerfully stacks unassembled cardboard boxes in sets of 25. Shannon Webster serves catered lunches.

All three of these 30-something adults work in the prevocational program at Janus Developmental Services in Noblesville where they have mastered basic skills and developed values that make for enthusiastic, dependable workers. They arrive on time, take pride in what they do, and enjoy work's tangible rewards: a paycheck.

"I love working; I like the money," laughed Webster, 31, who also has a cleaning job at a local movie theater. "I have my own room, my own TV, my own DVD player."

A recent change in government policy for persons with disabilities who receive services through Medicaid – as most of Janus' clients do -- will drastically shorten the time they can participate in the prevocational program. Until Oct. 1, clients could participate in the prevocational program indefinitely; new rules limit funding to 12 months. Likewise, a support program for clients who hold jobs in the community, called Support Employment Follow Along, or SEFA, will be capped at 18 months.

The changes caught service providers such as Janus (pronounced JAY-nus) off-guard.

"Ninety percent of our (prevocational clients) will not ever be able to work in the community," said Janus' President and CEO Connie F. Sanders. She wonders what will happen to her clients' skills and self-esteem when their 12-month limit expires.

Janus, a non-profit company, receives \$4.80 an hour for every person enrolled in prevocation. The first cutbacks, which would take place by next October, will

cost Janus \$70,000; the SEFA program will lose \$20,000.

The prevocational program, which includes both training and work, gives the 72 adults in it a realistic work experience.

"We contract with area businesses and provide the venue and the productive work force," said Sanders. "They provide the work and pay our consumers. Most of the work is piece work."

Last year, 27 area companies had contracts with Janus, including Freedom Pharmacy, Indy Lighting and F.C. Tucker Co. Eight-seven adults with disabilities were working for 41 employers in the Noblesville community.



Photos by Leslie Webber

(Top) Amanda Simpson (left) and Cheryl Bowlin work together at Janus Developmental Services, which last year placed 87 adults with disabilities with 41 employers in the Noblesville community. (Above) Gourd birdhouses can be purchased at Janus headquarters.

"We never, ever want to have someone feel like they're doing us a favor by giving us a contract," Sanders said. "We appreciate the work, but you will never get a substandard job from our consumers. The quality is higher than you will find in the general population – every time."

Teresa Steege, vice president of operations at Janus, said she is fortunate to have grown up in a generation where people with disabilities were not shut away.

"I (saw) people with disabilities being mainstreamed in society," she said.

A generation or two ago, however, it was not uncommon for doctors to encourage new parents to place their developmentally disabled babies in an institution, and to tell them they wouldn't live long. There was little thought of trying to keep these children at home, much less believe they could lead independent, productive lives.

But in 1979 some citizens in Hamilton and Tipton counties decided they weren't going to listen to the experts anymore. The Hamilton County Association for Special Citizens and the Tipton County Association for Retarded Citizens merged to form the non-profit Janus Developmental Services Inc.

The mission of Janus is to help developmentally disabled people live as independently as possible. Their services include the state-funded First Steps program for developmentally delayed children up to age 3, a habilitation program to teach life skills such as cooking, exercise and banking, and a community employment program.

"Right now there's a lot of anxiety because of the one-year time frame," said John Dickerson, executive director of the Arc of Indiana, an advocacy organization for people with disabilities and their families. Arc has been working with the Indiana Association of Rehabilitative Facilities (INARF) to come up with a compromise proposal for the state to consider.

If that doesn't work, Sanders said she will campaign to fight these changes.

"On Oct. 1, that clock started ticking," she said.

ABOUT JANUS

Mission statement:

Provides individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate and contribute within the community.

Items for sale:

Crafts such as painted gourd birdhouses, cat trees, coin banks and walking sticks made by clients in the Hidden Talents project can be purchased at Janus headquarters.

Location:

155 Westfield Blvd., Noblesville

Contact:

(317) 773-8781, www.janus-inc.org

TAKE THE BUS

Janus also operates Hamilton County Express, a public transportation service for everyone in Hamilton County.

The blue and white buses, which pick you up at your door and deliver you to your destination, run from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Fares are \$4 one way for an adult, \$2 for student. A \$50 monthly pass provides unlimited rides.

For reservations, call (317) 773-2688 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.