

Achiever

Building skills, careers and independence since 1964.

Dedicated to providing respectful and responsible services that promote and enhance quality of life.

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Achieve participants advocate, meet with elected officials



Achieve participants visited the capitol in St. Paul to meet with elected officials and advocate for programs that support people with disabilities and to promote Achieve Clean.

(Left) Jameson Crawford met with Senator Karin Housley. (Right) Tom Botzet met with Senator Carolyn Laine. More information on legislative matters on page 2.

Dance At Your Own Risk live concert a success

Dance at Your Own Risk performed live, in concert, at Lyric Arts in Anoka.

The group uses iPads, composition software and various instruments to write, record and produce original songs. Genres range from mellow country to upbeat club music.

The musicians have released four albums and are scheduled to release a fifth by the end of the year. Their music is available on CDs sold at Achieve or as digital downloads on iTunes, Amazon and other online music distributors.



Dance at Your Own Risk Music Director, Joe Loskota (right) holds the mic for musician, Scott Brauch.

Newsletter of



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Legislative update - a brief reprieve, but funding cuts looming

Judge Gideon J. Tucker famously stated, “No man’s life, liberty or property is safe while the Legislature is in session.” I would simply add that we’re no better off when Congress is in session.

Actually, the Minnesota Legislature took some positive steps during the past session to temper the destruction they’d previously done to services for those with disabilities. The disability waiver rate system (DWRS) is the funding mechanism for disability services, with half the funding coming from the state, and the other half from federal sources. In 2013, the Legislature enacted changes to the DWRS funding formula, which were well-intended but in reality are causing significant harm.

At Achieve, for example, if the DWRS were fully implemented as originally crafted, our waiver funding would decline over the course of six years for a total of roughly 34 percent by 2020. Fortunately, this year State Senator Jim Abeler championed changes to the DWRS, resulting in Achieve’s cut going from 34 percent to approximately 23 percent. Abeler also added an additional year to the phase-in period, giving us until 2021 to adjust and seek more improvements. After initially vetoing the legislation, Governor Dayton ultimately signed the bill into law. Our rate structure is still not sustainable, but this year’s legislative changes are certainly an improvement.

And about the time the Legislature went home, Congress began its attempt to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. In May, the House passed its version of the “American Health Care Act,” which included provisions that slashed Medicaid – the federal funding source for disability services. In the following months, the Senate attempted to pass its own new health care bill, but the Medicaid cuts remained, and as of this writing, it looks like the Senate bill will fail. Needless to say, we’ll be keeping a close eye on Washington as the health care discussion continues.

This is a period of unprecedented turmoil and here at Achieve we are doing a number of things to secure program services for the future. One key response is to work to reduce our reliance on government funding. We are moving in the right direction. Six years ago, government subsidies comprised over 90 percent of our total revenues. Today that number is closer to 80 percent. Creating and building funding streams that are within our control is a priority for our future.

In order to move toward self-sustainability, we have increased fundraising efforts. Our spring Gala raised a record amount this



Tom Weaver, Achieve CEO

year. We have done more grant writing. For instance we received funding for a staff person to market and help boost sales of Achieve Clean laundry detergent. We have a number of entrepreneurial efforts, including Achieve Clean, that have the potential to grow exponentially and generate not only good jobs for our workers but new streams of revenue. As all these efforts toward self-sustainability grow, so will our independence. And here at Achieve, we’ve always seen independence as a good, and valuable thing.

Judge Tucker was correct. To some extent the Legislature does control life and liberty. Legislative decisions and changes are inevitable. Falling victim to them is not.

At Achieve we will continue to work towards independence – for the individuals we serve and in the ways our program is funded. In the meantime, we continue to hope that the Legislature and other governing bodies support the success and independence of people with disabilities and the programs providing services to them. 

It takes a village...

At Achieve we look forward to the future. But we realize it will bring change. Now more than ever we need community support. What can you do?

- Frequent and support businesses providing jobs and work for Achieve.
- Hire an Achieve worker.
- Provide work for Achieve’s shop.
- Contact elected officials and voice your support of programs for people with disabilities.
- Purchase an Achieve Clean laundry detergent subscription.
- Attend one of our fundraisers.
- Make a donation to the Achieve Endowment Fund.
- Download a Dance at Your Own Risk album from iTunes or Amazon.
- Purchase Achieve-made products like greeting cards and magnets.

Achieve artwork on display in St. Paul

Two Achieve participants, Jordina Bruvold and Kelly Rohan, were honored to have their artwork on display in the Federal Reserve Building in St. Paul. (Left) Jordina and her mom visited the exhibit and posed by one of Jordina's works. (Right) Kelly stands next to a dual framed piece celebrating snowflakes and snowfall.



Fostering growth in creative arts is an important part of the services provided by Achieve because people of all abilities have a need for self-expression. Achieve artists express themselves through painting, drawing, writing and performing music. The arts provide numerous benefits. They are a way to promote personal growth

and help a person share his or her own creative voice and vision. They encourage socialization and allow for the expression of emotion. Finally, artistic expression can boost self-esteem and self-worth that comes from creating something beautiful. ▲

What do you do?

What do you do?

How would you answer that question? Most of us would provide an answer that relates to our vocation. I'm a teacher. I'm in sales. I'm a custodian. I'm a nurse. I'm a bricklayer. I'm a CEO. Our job, our career – it's what we do. It's a big part of who we are.

Going to work means money in our pockets and food on the table. But for most of us, there is much more to it than that. Our job becomes fundamental to our identity and the way we look at and feel about ourselves. It makes us a part of the culture of the company that employs us. We are contributors – to the workforce and society. Work gives us independence and choices. It allows us to show our skills and build on them. Our work is what we do.

“Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.”

Theodore Roosevelt

These facts are no different for people with disabilities. For a person with disabilities, meaningful work and a meaningful career can be a tremendous source of self-worth, purpose and independence.

In addition, research shows that hiring employees with disabilities brings benefits to a workplace through increased diversity, a positive impact on the bottom line, lowered turnover, strengthened workforce morale, employee loyalty and a positive public perception of your business.

Yet, people with disabilities battle barriers and misconceptions about their employability. According to the National Bureau of Labor Statistics, the overall 2013 national unemployment rate for people with disabilities ages 16 and older

was nearly double that of the rate for people with no disability in the same age group – 13.2 percent, compared to 7.1 percent.

Businesses hiring workers with disabilities provide the opportunity for that worker to move beyond his or her disability to become a fast food worker, an office assistant, a child-care worker, an assembler, a receptionist, a mail delivery clerk, custodial worker or any other job a person chooses to pursue.

For people with any level and type of ability (or disability) a job is often much more than a paycheck. There is intrinsic value to work for all of us. It's what we do. ▲



We've Got Personability Gala!

More than 300 attendees helped to make the 12th annual We've Got Personability Gala the most successful ever! More than \$240,000 was raised to help and support people with disabilities lead meaningful and determined lives.

Jim and Pam Deal repeated their generosity from last year's Gala by donating an additional \$100,000 to Achieve's Endowment Fund. The Deals were also presented with Achieve's Legacy Award, which recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Another highlight of the evening included a Fund-a-Need campaign, which raised enough money to purchase a wheelchair accessible van to increase accessibility to the community for participants who use wheelchairs. 



Jim and Pam Deal, this year's Legacy Award recipients, generously donated \$100,000 to Achieve's Endowment Fund.





Presents: “Aaron’s Laundry Day” & a new music video

Doing the laundry shouldn’t be a hassle. That’s the premise of a new commercial advertising Achieve Clean laundry detergent titled, “Aaron’s Laundry Day.”

The minute-long video stars Achieve participant, Aaron Magnuson, who’s appeared in a number of previous videos promoting Achieve Clean. The humorous spoof shows how complicated and frustrating buying detergent can be. It then ends with the hassle-free option of an Achieve Clean subscription delivered right to your own front door.

Or, if you are more musically inclined, check out the new Achieve Clean music video starring Aaron along with Kelly and Jess all dancing to the beat of a catchy new jingle.

You can view both at the Achieve Clean Facebook page. Or, even better, begin your own subscription to Achieve Clean. Numerous options are available depending on your laundry needs. 

Aaron, top photo on right, gets prepped to film the latest Achieve Clean commercial. Below from left, Kelly, Aaron and Jess are featured in a new Achieve Clean music video.



Workers with disabilities benefit the workplace

The ADA was passed 27 years ago, but workers with disabilities still face challenges. The unemployment rate for America’s 56 million individuals with disabilities is more than double than for non-disabled counterparts. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the 2016 unemployment rate of persons with a disability was 10.5%; the rate for those without a disability was 4.6%.

Employment has benefits beyond a paycheck. Getting up and going to work gives a purpose to one’s day, leading to both physiological and psychological perks. Social benefits come from interacting with co-workers. New job tasks require learning and an added skillset. A report published by the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), found people who are working report being happier than those who do not work.

Employment doesn’t just help the employee. Employers, co-workers and communities benefit as well.

HELP notes that neighborhoods with high employment have less crime and a greater sense of community. Work allows people with disabilities to contribute to their through the work they do, through paying taxes and charitable contributions.

Employers also reap the benefits. Workers with disabilities contribute needed skills to the workforce. As baby boomers move to a life of retirement, there will be a growing need for workers to replace them.

Workers with disabilities are motivated employees who strive for success on the job. This leads to a couple of positive outcomes. First, motivated employees benefit the bottom line. Second, they improve the workforce culture with a positivity that can’t be measured.

In general, the practice of hiring workers with disabilities is perceived as favorable. This increases a customer base and can help in recruiting other highly qualified employees who want to be part of a progressive and inclusive corporate culture.

Workers with disabilities are reliable, loyal employees with low job turnover rates. Studies show they bring innovation and creativity to the workplace. Finally, there are tax incentives available to businesses hiring workers with disabilities.

There is a national push to place more workers with disabilities in community-based jobs. Employment of people with disabilities is a win-win situation. For more information on how Achieve can help you meet your business goals, contact us today. 

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Summer... picnic and plant sales

Achieve staff and participants officially welcomed summer with the annual summer picnic. Grillmasters, Pete, Lonnie and Jim were at their posts and everyone else arrived hungry. Hamburgers, hot dogs, beans, chips and ice cold pop rounded out the menu. All in all it was a great day!

Another annual summer enterprise is the Achieve plant sale. Tomatoes and other garden veggies, grown with TLC at Achieve, were available for purchase earlier this summer. 

