

## **Bulman Products—A long term supporter of the mission of Hope Network**

**H**ope Network has worked with Bulman Products since the mid-1980's. Many individuals at the Northwest Center, Cedar Springs

Center and Southwest Center have had the opportunity to develop their work skills by putting together spring arm sub-assemblies. When we looked for opportunities to provide more work in the community, we approached Bulman Products about the possibility of a group site within their organization.



*Bulman employee Glenda Wilson shares a laugh with Sharon Lesert, who is happy for the opportunity to make new friends.*

In January of 1994, Dave Wynbeek, a Hope Network West Michigan staff member who was familiar with the Bulman jobs, and a group of 10 individuals from Northwest Center, Southwest Center, and Cedar Springs Center transferred to the new Bulman group site. The size of the group work-



*Dave Wynbeek, Hope Network Job Coach, helps supervise the Hope Network work group at Bulman Products.*

ing at this site has grown to 15. Bulman staff identified additional tasks that could be completed by the Hope Network West Michigan Group and the number and variety of jobs done for Bulman has increased.

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The employees of the Bulman Company—led by their President, Jack Kirkwood—have actively promoted the integration and inclusion of the group site workers. Mr. Kirkwood stated, "Since we've had Hope Network workers at Bulman, all of us have become more understanding and tolerant of persons with disabilities. We've made new friends and in a couple of cases, those friendships extend outside of work. We see people, whom others would

say were unfairly treated by life, but who come to Bulman to work, with happy smiles and enthusiastic attitudes that are simply infectious. These folks love to come to work and that's a great boost for all of us. It has been a wonderful experience for Bulman employees."

Examples of the supports that Bulman staff have provided include: visiting a sick worker from the Hope Network group

who was in the hospital, including the Hope Network group in company lunches and pizza parties, and supporting Hope Network fundraising activities.

Hope Network West Michigan salutes Bulman Products for practicing the mission of Hope Network on a daily basis.

## Faith, Inc. and Hope West Working for Success



Hope West and Faith, Inc. employees (clockwise from top left) Chris Sales, Dan Zylstra, Ken Frederick, Dave Christmann, Nancy Potgeter, Laura White, Deb Riley, Sarah Monroe, and Maria Klemp.

**F**aith, Inc. and Hope Network West Michigan work together to create employment opportunities for people who are homeless. Over the years, the partnership between Hope Network and Faith, Inc. has helped numerous people throughout our community train for quality jobs to help break the cycle of homelessness. Over the past year, Faith, Inc. has helped over 400 people earn more than \$600,000 from jobs in the community.

## Michigan Works! Provides a Host of Services Under one Roof



**H**ave you seen the Meijer slogan, "a million reasons...single store"? The State of Michigan has decided to take this approach to providing employment and training services. They have created a series of "one-stop" Michigan Works! Service Centers where information about and access to job training, education and employment is available at a single neighborhood location.

At a Michigan Works! Service Center, customers will be able to easily:

- assess their vocational skill levels, aptitudes, abilities and support needs.
- Obtain information on employment-related services, including information about local education and training.
- Receive help filing claims for unemployment insurance, posting a resume on the

Internet and reviewing job openings that have been posted by local employers.

- Obtain job search and placement assistance, including career counseling.

Hope Network West Michigan, through its Employment Services Department, operates the Michigan Works! Service Centers in Kent, Mecosta, and Newaygo Counties. In Kent County there are three Services Centers: the Sheldon Complex at the corner of Franklin and Jefferson; the former MESC Office on Plainfield near Three Mile Road; and the former Migrant Services Office in Sparta. In Mecosta County the Service Center is located in Big Rapids. In Newaygo County the Service Center is located in Fremont.

The Michigan Works! Service Center is *the* place for a job seeker or an employer to go for anything related to employment. Hope Network West Michigan helped 814 persons find jobs through the Michigan Works! Service Centers in 2000. Over 1600 persons stopped at our centers to get employment assistance.



## Greetings from the Desk of the Executive Director

**H**ope Network West Michigan has developed an excellent partnership with employers and businesses in the West Michigan area. Employers have provided excellent work opportunities to persons with disabilities or disadvantages in our community. Many local manufacturers have outsourced their assembly and packaging needs to Hope Network so that we could train persons in basic work skills.

The result of this community effort benefits all participants. Employers have found dependable new employees. Persons with a disability or disadvantage are earning a living and contributing to our community. Fellow employees are learning what it is like to live and work with a disability. Business partners have found new and reasonable ways to get their light assembly work accomplished. I want to express our appreciation to the hundreds of West Michigan employers who have provided a work opportunity to the persons served by Hope Network West Michigan.

If you are looking for good workers or need assistance with light assembly or packaging, give me a call at 248-5214. We want to put the community to WORK!

Best wishes,

Paul Ippel

## Rodney's Story



**R**odney is a 31-year old father of three. Because he had fallen behind in his child support payments, Rodney was referred to the Non-Custodial Parent program by the

Kent County Friend of the Court Office.

Rodney started the program in December of 1998 so that he could find a job and support his children. He participated in a two-week job seeking class and was assigned to work with a Job Placement Advocate. Rodney expressed an interest in shipping/ receiving, warehouse, or delivery work, but his attendance was sporadic. In March of 1999 he started work at Belwith International; he worked one day and quit. He was hired by UPS

in April; he worked one week and then quit. Rodney failed to keep a job interview at Frito-Lay in June of 1999. Rodney was unmotivated for employment and was finally terminated from the program in September for non-compliance.

During the next year Rodney would occasionally stop by the program to talk with the staff. In October, 2000 the Friend of the Court issued a bench warrant. Rodney returned to the program for the second time. This time Rodney's approach was more

## National Results Council (NRC)



**T**he National Results Council (NRC) is a national non-profit organization that independently measures and compares the perfor-

mance of employment and training programs throughout the US. On a quarterly basis, Hope Network submits performance information to the NRC on individuals served and the outcomes achieved. We submit data regarding wages, number of individuals placed into employment and the cost per person served. We just received the report for the 1999-2000 year, and are pleased to report the average weekly wages of individuals placed into competitive employment exceeds

both the average of all organizations participating in the NRC, as well as exceeds the NRC standard for that indicator.

Vocational Results for the 1999-2000 Year:

- We assisted 1146 persons to find competitive employment
- 76 persons obtained supported individual placements
- High customer satisfaction

## G.A.T.E. Program Employment More than Just a Job

business-like. He would arrive early and was motivated to obtain employment. Staff helped him to update his resume, find stable housing, and clarify information on his police record.

Rodney reconnected with the mother of his child and they began raising their son together. He has visitation rights with one of his daughters and started the process to establish regular visitation with his other daughter.

He obtained employment on November 27, 2000 and is earning a good wage. The program helped him buy clothing for interviewing and for his new job. Rodney is now paying his weekly child support. We are helping Rodney get his car repaired and properly registered to support his efforts to maintain employment. Rodney also expressed an interest in getting culinary arts training with the hope of becoming a chef, and has been referred to the program coordinator at Grand Rapids Community College.

Raymond Jackson, the Manager of the Non-Custodial Parent program, said, "When you read Rodney's story you see that changing a life is a continuing process."

**I** first heard about the opening for a peer support specialist at the G.A.T.E. Program in late spring of 2000. (The G.A.T.E. Program assists persons with mental illness to find and keep a job.) A couple of friends encouraged me to apply. Just before the actual interview, I heard I would be interviewing with other applicants at the same time.

The interview was with program participants as well as with the other staff at G.A.T.E. I was nervous, but I don't think I could have been better prepared. When it was over, I felt good about the interview; but I still didn't think I would get the position. When Will called me and offered me the position as peer support specialist for the G.A.T.E. program, I thought that he was kidding. Since being hired, I have learned to have a better sense of humor. I feel a true sense of working as a team and feel appreciated for what I bring to the team as a co-worker. At some previous jobs I could feel the unspoken that I was different from others. This is the stigma, which comes with mental illness. I have not felt this at this job which is very gratifying.

My father is proud of what I am doing. He knows I also speak at



*Leann Ringleka (right), with G.A.T.E. Employment Training Specialist Cynthia Arnold. Leann is thankful for the opportunities the G.A.T.E. Program has provided.*

different locations on mental illness and knows how it feels for me to live with it. My dad now tells me not to stop what I'm doing and to keep up the good work. In the past he didn't accept my illness and I think he was embarrassed. I'm flying out to see him this Christmas after quite a few years, and am looking forward to our reunion.

## Chalet NET III: A Celebration of Achievement



*NET Program participants received welcome recognition this past November for their efforts in finding and maintaining employment within the community.*

**O**n Friday, November 17, family and friends of NET Program participants were invited to congratulate and praise individuals for a job well done. The NET Program focuses on assisting and supporting people with disabilities in get-

ting and keeping a job in the community. Activities at the program include individual and group discussions, classes related to grooming and hygiene, interpersonal relationships, safety, community awareness, and choice and self-advocacy.

Approximately 220 people had the opportunity to join in a celebration of achievement. The Awards Banquet "Chalet NET III" was held at Ottawa High School. Approximately 80 people received Certificates of Accomplishment, and 20 people were recognized

with Achievement Awards for gaining and maintaining employment in the community.

### How can I partner with Hope Network West Michigan?

- Provide funding to support our pastoral services program
- Encourage your church or club to adopt a program or home
- Provide sub-contract work or employment opportunities
- Sponsor or participate in the Hope Network Golf Outing on July 30, 2001, Railside Golf Course

#### Hope Network West Michigan Board of Directors:

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