

Providing employment and other services to people with disabilities for over 40 years.

Achiever

Building skills, careers, and independence.

Inside this issue

We are reminded of the past, present and future and the importance of each. Remembering the past helps us to forge ahead and appreciate today. Rick Bro (page 2) and Mary Trench and Vickie Botzet (page 4) have rich histories and plentiful memories of Achieve that hopefully will continue far into the future. We recently said goodbye to David Thoreson, Randy Anderson and Jordan Whittet (page 5), but their memories will live on within us all. Mara Staiger (page 3) shows us that new energy and ideas are vital for growth.



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Defining success Finding your own path

A career path doesn't usually go straight from point A to point B. It can take many different curves and turns, in part because the word "career" can mean different things to different people. For some, it's all about opportunities for advancement. Others may measure their career success by the amount of their paycheck. Fringe benefits, the ability to work part-time or a positive work environment are other factors that many consider.

Career success can be as unique as the people filling the careers. For Mary Trench and Vickie Botzet, two Achieve participants, success has come in numerous, different ways over the years as each of these ladies' definitions of work, career and success has evolved and changed with time.

Between the two of them, Mary and Vickie have 53 years of service logged in at Achieve. Mary Trench first walked through the program's doors in 1979 when she was 32 years old. A 22-year-old Vickie Botzet came a few years later in 1982.

While career paths and ideals change over the years. Both Mary and Vickie have seen services change as well. Back in the early 80's, work wasn't as readily available as it is today. People with disabilities working in the community were the exception, not the rule. Earning a paycheck was, for many, a dream.



In a photo from Achieve's archives, Mary Trench assists CEO Rick Bro with mopping duties.

Achieve was making the transition from work-simulated tasks to real subcontract jobs. In their early days at Achieve, both Mary and Vickie spent the bulk of the day working in Achieve's shop.

The shop can sometimes be noisy, however, and that proved to be a source of anxiety for Vickie. "She is affected by loud noise levels and a lot of activity," explained Sherri Adams, training specialist. "The workshop was a difficult setting for Vickie and it may have contributed to increased anxiety for her."

Other options were considered and Vickie worked for a time at Ajax, a machine shop that proved to be too loud for Vickie's liking.

Achieve looked for a quieter job site, and found it at Zeos International, a computer manufacturer. The days were quieter and less anxiety-producing, but the computer industry is ever-changing. Zeos was sold by its owners, causing job turnover for Achieve workers at the site. Armed with the knowledge of what jobs worked best for Vickie, Achieve again looked for the right fit for her.

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In her early days at Achieve, Vickie Botzet worked in the shop on rubber o-rings.

THANKS, MIKE

Back in 1964, a new program, called the Anoka County Developmental Achievement Center (DAC), opened its doors for the first time. The program served preschool children with developmental disabilities. Ten years later, a second Anoka County DAC opened its doors. This program operated out of a local church and served four adult participants. It was a place for adults with developmental disabilities to gain skills and abilities necessary to work and be a part of the community.

We might take these things for granted today, but this was a new concept in 1974.

Back in 1974, a common thought was that adults with developmental disabilities were best served in large, segregated sites. State hospitals – in Cambridge or Faribault – were often “home” and “work” for people with disabilities.

But, the '70's were times of change in many ways. Some people began thinking that state institutions might not be the best place for people with developmental disabilities. Maybe it would be better for adults with disabilities to live and work within their own home communities, in close proximity to friends, family and other supporters.

While there were numerous supporters behind these “new” ideas, there was one spirited and passionate man who I'll never forget. His name was Mike O'Bannon.

Mike O'Bannon was an Anoka County Commissioner. He was knowledgeable and decisive. You didn't have to guess what Mike was thinking because he'd always tell you – sometimes quite loudly. He was also a forward thinker with a soft spot for our programs. He helped start the Anoka County DAC for children back in 1964, and supported the expansion to serve adults in 1974. Through the years he proved to be one of our biggest supporters.

To some, Mike's demeanor might have seemed a little intimidating at first. But you didn't have to look very far to see that his heart was even bigger than his booming voice.

This big Irishman chaired our board for over 20 years before retiring. During his tenure, he provided a strong voice for our program and for people with developmental disabilities. He had many key phrases. My favorite was, “You've got to crawl before you can walk.” That is the way that Mike looked at things – one step at a time.

Mike hired me in 1972. I always said that I spent the rest of my years trying to convince him that he hadn't made a mistake.

Over forty years ago, when a fledgling program called Anoka County DAC was created, it was, in large part, due to Mike and others like him who were committed to improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Mike recently passed away. When I reflect on his role with our program, I think of the



**By: Richard Bro, CEO
Achieve Services, Inc.**

great changes and progress that he witnessed over the years. He must have felt a sense of pride knowing that his impact helped people with developmental disabilities become active, valuable members of the community.

Starting out in that little church so many years ago, who would have guessed? A fledgling program that had to justify its existence has become a successful entity that businesses and community members rely on to provide needed and valuable services. People with disabilities, their families and community members now think of Faribault and Cambridge as two cities, not two state hospitals. We have come so far. Thanks, Mike, for leading us.

Richard Bro, CEO
Achieve Services, Inc.

Achieve to hold Second Annual Get on Board fundrasier at Majestic Oaks

Get ready to eat, drink, laugh and spend money for a good cause. Achieve will hold its Second Annual Buy a Bus fundraiser at Majestic Oaks Golf Club on Saturday, May 5.

The evening will start at 5:00 with a social hour and silent auction. Dinner follows at 6:00 with comedian, Alex Jackson, busting everyone's britches afterward. A \$500 door prize guarantees that someone will leave the event a little richer than before.

“Last year's event was extremely successful,” commented CEO Rick Bro. “We hope to outdo ourselves by making this year's event an even bigger success,” he promised.

Tickets for the event will go on sale starting in March, and can be purchased for \$25 each at Achieve or from any Village Bank location. Donations for the silent auction are now being accepted. Please contact Achieve at 763-783-4909 if you have items to donate.

Longtime advocate for people with disabilities brings energy and enthusiasm “on board”

For Achieve Board Member, Mara Staiger, supporting people with disabilities has been a lifelong pursuit.

Staiger grew up with a sister with disabilities and saw firsthand the hurdles that, at times, had to be overcome.

“When I was growing up, it wasn’t as common to see a person with disabilities out in the community,” she said. “When I was out in public with my sister, who uses a wheelchair, people would stare because they weren’t used to seeing people in wheelchairs.”

Staiger has seen positive changes over the years. “There are more services available for families that have children with disabilities, and they are right in the community,” she said. “When I go out with my sister now, people don’t stare because they see people with disabilities as active members of the community.”

Staiger has been an advocate for her sister and others for as long as she can remember, so it only made sense that she continue her work after moving from her hometown in southern Minnesota to the Twin Cities. Two years ago, while volunteering at an American Cancer Society garage sale, she struck up a conversation with a woman who happened to be a staff member at Achieve.

“I’d worked in another program similar to Achieve’s, so I was familiar with the concept,” she commented. “I was

impressed with the work that went on at Achieve.”

So impressed that she was willing to dig in and become a board member. “I didn’t hesitate,” she said. “I was absolutely willing to get involved as a board member of Achieve.”

That was two years, and many board meetings ago. During her tenure on the board, Staiger has proven herself to be a positive and energetic presence.

“Mara is a very upbeat and energetic person,” commented Jim Rooker, program supervisor. “She has brought this enthusiasm to the board. She also has experience, through her sister, with services like Achieve provides. This gives her a good perspective on what we provide and what is possible in the future.”

Rick Bro, Achieve CEO, agrees. “Mara is a bright young woman with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. She is committed to our mission at Achieve and is willing to share this energy with us to accomplish this purpose,” he said.

Carol Donahoe, program director, sees Staiger’s abilities taking Achieve on a positive path. “Mara has good insight into Achieve’s future and how to get us there,” she said.

And what does Staiger see as priorities for Achieve in the coming years?



PROFILE:

Achieve board member Mara Staiger

Arc volunteer 32 years plus

B.A. degree – University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire in Spanish and German

Operation Specialists Manager,

Life Policy Administration,

Minnesota Life Insurance Company

Hobbies – International travel, kickboxing

“I would like to see Achieve grow,” she commented. “I think the program is doing fine financially and there is room to grow. This might mean another facility and more programs,” she said.

According to Staiger, growth would help accomplish the overall goal of the program: helping people with disabilities be essential and accepted members of their communities. “Programs like Achieve encourage and help people with developmental disabilities to become active, contributing members of the community,” she said. “It’s good for the general community to have interactions with people with disabilities and vice versa. It helps everyone become more accepting.” ▲

Defining your own success

continued from cover

A career path can take many different curves and turns...



There was a job available doing office work for the Anoka County Government Center, and Vickie agreed to give it a try. This match seems to be a good one.

"It took us a few jobs to find the right one for Vickie," commented Carol Donahoe, program director. "She has great skills and is capable of doing just about anything, but she prefers a quiet office setting."

Just because a person has found the type of work they like and the environment they prefer doesn't mean they have to remain stagnant. And, if you've ever met Vickie, you'll know that "stagnant" does not come close to describing her vivacious, warm personality. While she enjoys her job at the government center, she recently requested a job trial at Medtronic where she temporarily performed clerical support duties.

She may request to be considered for a permanent position at Medtronic, elect to stay with her current job at the government center or Vickie might decide to ask for a trial at a different location. Only she knows where her career path will lead her next.

While the work tasks have changed over the years, there are a number of desirable traits that Vickie consistently brings to everything she does.

"I think of her as a dedicated and steady worker," said Sue Suchy, program specialist.



"She has a very strong work ethic," agreed Adams. "She remains on task and her work quality is consistently good. She knows that others depend on her for the work she completes and she doesn't want to let them down. In addition to her excellent work, she is pleasant and thoughtful to her co-workers, making her a well-rounded employee."

Mary Trench recently celebrated her sixtieth birthday with a gigantic celebration complete with a scrumptious cake. For Mary, birthdays are all about the cake – that, and of course, pop.

"Mary is a gourmand," said Suchy. "She recently told me about a coconut cake that created such a craving in me that I had to go home and make one for myself. She discourses about pop like other people talk about wine. She refers to Classic Coke as 'the hard stuff.'"

During her 28 years at Achieve, Mary has completed many jobs, most within Achieve's own workshop. She has proven to be a dependable, reliable worker.

"Mary is very conscientious, consistent and always gives her best effort," said Joanne Hollom, training specialist. "She cannot leave an area unless it is cleaner than it was when she arrived."

In addition to work in the shop, Mary has

Vickie Botzet (far left) and Mary Trench have worked at Achieve for a cumulative 53 years. They've worked at numerous sites on many different jobs. During it all, each woman has achieved success every step of the way.

participated in occupational therapy and an exercise group or two over the years. She has always enjoyed socializing, and her friendships are as near and dear to her heart as her Classic Coke.

"She is feisty, quite sharp and has a great sense of humor," commented Katie Friary, program manager. "She has a way of working her way into your heart. She is very endearing."

Many people have trouble putting their priorities in order. Mary isn't one of them. In addition to friends and food, Mary has one more very important aspect in her life: family.

"Mary is very sociable. She politely asks about people's families and enjoys talking about her own," explained Ralph Vossberg, behavior analyst.

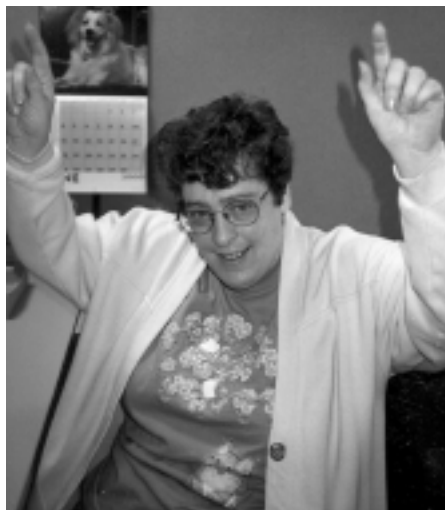
"She likes to talk about her family, but will ask me about mine as well," said Suchy.

There are times when she worries that she won't be able to see her family as scheduled. "We try to help empower her by assuring her that she can visit her family," explained Vossberg. "I believe this makes her a little more able to cope with these thoughts and lets her feel happier."

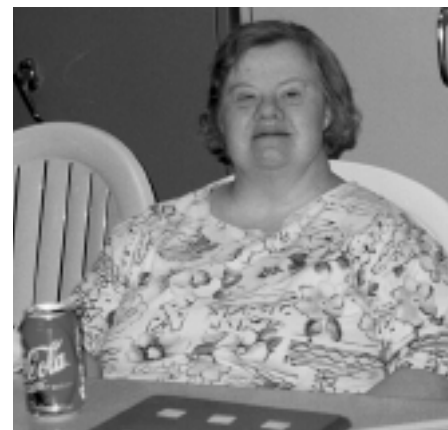
While Mary's schedule has varied throughout the years, she currently divides her time between the shop and other activities. "She works in the shop for about an hour each morning," said Hollom. "Then she eats lunch and does the dishes in the participant kitchen. She ends her day visiting and doing a leisure activity of her choice."

because “career” can mean different things to different people.

Vickie Botzet celebrates one of many successes on the job at the Anoka County Government Center, while Mary Trench takes a break with “the hard stuff.”



Mary Trench and Vickie Botzet came to Achieve decades ago when the notion of people with disabilities striving for successful careers was a ground-breaking idea.



Both ladies have earned many paychecks over the years. But they’ve also earned things even more important than that – respect of co-workers, life-long friendships and careers that in so many ways can be deemed successful in the truest sense of the word. ▲

“She really seems to love doing the dishes,” commented Friary. “She chats the entire time.”

Most people choose to decrease their workload a bit as they grow older and Mary is no exception. “She is on a partial retirement schedule, and comes to work here three days a week,” explained Friary. “She seems to have slowed down a bit over the years, but haven’t we all?”



David Thoreson

In memory...

Achieve recently said “goodbye” to three well-loved participants who passed away, David Thoreson, Randy Anderson and Jordan Whittet.

David

David worked at Achieve for 30 years, and spent most of that time lighting up the room with his warm and generous smile.

“He took a lot pride in his work,” said Heather Anderson, training specialist. “He had a very strong work ethic and was a strong Christian. He would offer to pray for others.”

“David was a man who posed quiet strength,” commented Sherri Adams, training specialist. “He was distinguished, wise, proud, hard-working, a man with strong family values and a gentle, sweet soul.”



Randy Anderson

Randy

Randy also worked at Achieve for 30 years, and was truly proud of the jobs that he did.

“He would rather be at work than stay home,” commented Anderson.

“He lived for his job at McDonald’s,” said Adams. “On weekends, he wouldn’t slip into comfy clothes. Instead, he would put on his McDonald’s uniform. There is one who loves his job!”

Randy was known for his playful nature, friendly personality and love of sports.

“He had the kind of giggle that just let you know he was up to something,” remarked Adams.

“He had a contagious smile,” said Dianne Zach, administrative assistant.

“Randy was a gentle, kindhearted person who just wanted to enjoy

life and laugh with friends. That, AND work at McDonalds,” said Adams.

Jordan

Jordan began working with Achieve in 2004, and most recently worked at Medtronic in their patient services department.

“He was a master of all skills,” commented training specialist, Patty Peightol. “But, his favorite task was decorating our work area for each seasonal occasion. His art work was phenomenal!”

“Jordan captured a lot of hearts here,” commented co-worker, Lori Turbenson.

Beightol concurred. “Jordan left us far before his time,” she said. “I will try very hard to be like him by remembering others and thanking them for even the little things.” ▲

Meals on Wheels - giving back to the community

When you hear the phrase, "Take out or delivery," you might think of eating pizza or Chinese food. For a group of Achieve participants, these words likely conjure up a third meaning – helping others.

Each Monday, right around lunchtime, Achieve participants deliver meals to people who are home-bound and in need of assistance.

"We were looking for options for a regular activity that would give back to the community and could be of social benefit to participants," explained Jim Rooker, program manager. Meals on Wheels fits the bill.

Achieve works with the Meals on Wheels program at Unity Hospital. It's been a good match.

"They give us all the information we need," said Rooker. "We get route information, maps and emergency contact information. They are great to work with."

Usually from two to five Achieve workers complete the route each week, delivering up to a dozen lunches.

"We deliver to the same people each week," said Rooker. "At first the Meals on Wheels recipients seemed surprised that the person at their door was someone in a wheelchair or someone who needed assistance handing over the food, but now they have come to know us."

Likewise, Achieve participants have become familiar with the folks they deliver to. "We have participants who remember the names of people, and one who announces, 'meals on wheels,' when knocking on the door," commented Rooker.

Rooker has seen participants benefit in numerous ways

from this activity. "They are able to give back to their community in a very tangible way," he said. "They have interactions with people and perhaps can form community linkages. Most of the participants that help with Meals on Wheels rely on others for a lot of their needs throughout the day. Meals on Wheels gives them the opportunity to share this gift with others." ▲



Achieve participants make up to a dozen Meals on Wheels deliveries each week. Here Joe Loskota, training specialist, helps Matt Grieser make a delivery.

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