

Options

A quarterly newsletter of Anixter Center



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Fall 2005/Winter 2006

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Anixter Center celebrates successes at 26th Annual Awards Luncheon

All eyes were on Susan Daniels, Ph.D., featured speaker at Anixter Center's 26th Annual Awards Luncheon, when she proclaimed, "We all have two choices: Live long and eventually become disabled ... or die young! That's it!" Daniels, a nationally recognized spokesperson on employment and disability policy, addressed approximately 350 Anixter Center supporters at the agency's annual awards luncheon at the Hilton Chicago and Towers on October 28. The event honors individuals who have furthered the mission of Anixter Center – to assist people with disabilities to live and work successfully in the community.



Keynote speaker Susan Daniels at Anixter Center's 26th Annual Awards Luncheon

Presenting sponsors were Mesirow Financial and Walgreens. Fifth Third Bank was the lead sponsor. Participating sponsors included: Blackman Kallick; Chicago Cooling, Heating and Refrigeration; and LaSalle Bank. Board Chair Reneé Lumpkin launched the festivities by introducing Anixter Center President and CEO Allan I. Bergman. Allan introduced Anixter

Center's "new" Executive Vice President Cheryl Smith, who recently assumed her new responsibilities. Cheryl joined Anixter Center in 1990.

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26th Annual Awards Luncheon honorees and photos on page 4

CALOR employee honored for commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS

Joann Montes, a group facilitator and advisor for CALOR, is passionate about tearing down the cultural stigma of HIV/AIDS in the Latino community through education and outreach. In recognition of her contributions,

Joann recently was named the 2005 recipient of the *Mike Savage Human Spirit Award* by the AIDS Pastoral Care Network, a program of Access Community Health Network.

Please see Joann, Page 2



Access CEO Donna Thompson (left) and Joann Montes

Chicago Hearing Society and Independent Living staff assist hurricane evacuees

In the aftermath of last year's hurricanes Katrina and Rita, staff members from the Chicago Hearing Society (CHS) and the Independent Living Program pitched in to provide much-needed services and equipment for a group of evacuees who relocated to the Chicago area.

When CHS received a call from the Chicago Health Department requesting hearing aids for several evacuees, it contacted a key vendor, Siemens, a leading manufacturer of hearing aids. Siemens was happy to supply whatever was needed.

"We watch the news and see how much devastation and disruption people have had to endure. Then stop and think how much more difficult it is when someone has to contend with the loss of hearing

aids or other basic necessities that they need for daily living," says CHS Director Jill Sahakian.

Anixter Center's Independent Living Program provided bathing and toileting equipment to three elderly people who had been forced to leave behind nearly everything but the clothes they wore. Independent Living Skills Trainer Eugene Tong and other staff members delivered and adjusted equipment for two elderly evacuees.

In September, Independent Living Program staff members Cathy Mayorga and Ruby L. McCoy spent two days with staff from the Mayor's Office for People with



Independent Living Program staffer Eugene Tong adjusts equipment for 81-year old Katrina evacuee Annie Squalle

Disabilities and other city, county and state service providers at an intake center set up at Fosco Park in Chicago. They provided case management services to evacuees with disabilities as well as assistance with obtaining housing vouchers, CTA passes and other benefits.

Joann Montes from Page 1

"Joann is a model of integrity, self-reflection and action," says Access CEO Donna Thompson, who presented the award at the organization's annual "Tree of Life" breakfast in November at the School of the Art Institute.

For more than a year, Joann has provided mentoring and compassionate care for HIV positive clients who receive services through CALOR, a division of Anixter Center. She assists CALOR's clients in combatting HIV and AIDS through prevention education, free and confidential testing and treatment options. "It's all about empowerment," says Joann. "Building strong relationships within the community and making a difference in the lives of people fighting this disease are the reasons I do the work that I do. When I work with someone who applies what I've said, it makes all the effort worthwhile."

Prior to joining CALOR, Joann was a patient advocate

at Access Community Health Network, and she continues to volunteer with Access. A minister for more than 20 years, Joann also inspires her community and congregation as a soloist and choir director.

For the past five years, Joann's own HIV positive status has also contributed to her ministry. In the process of taking control of her condition and helping herself, she discovered the capacity to assist others. Specifically, Joann created Access Community Health Network's first church-based support group for Latina women. She currently works with Access to develop a network of ministers seeking to lead support groups for people impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Editor's Note: *Anixter Center and Access Community Health Network also partner in the operation of Access at Anixter, a clinic especially designed to meet the healthcare needs of individuals with disabilities. The clinic operates at 2032 N. Clybourn Ave.*

JobWorks hosts first job fair for people who are deaf

In partnership with Goodwill Services of Chicago, Goodwill Great Lakes, the Great Lakes Naval Base, and several Chicago-based agencies that serve individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, Anixter Center's JobWorks Program hosted its first-ever job fair this past October at Anixter Center's Employment Opportunities office, 2001 N. Clybourn Avenue. JobWorks is a program that focuses on pre- and post-placement services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Twenty-three applicants from participating agencies attended the job fair; 16 received offers and were hired on the spot. Eight of those hired were employment seekers who were working with JobWorks staff.

Job candidates who were interested in the available positions went through a case review two weeks prior to the job fair to determine if they had the skills necessary to be successful in the jobs they sought. Candidates then met face-to-face with representatives from Goodwill Services, hiring agent for Great Lakes Naval Base, during the two-day event. The majority of jobs were in the naval training facility's food service division and were made available through the Javits-Wagner O'Day (JWOD) legislation. The law mandates that federal agencies "set-aside" products and services to be procured from nonprofit rehabilitation agencies like Anixter Center and Goodwill Great Lakes, which employ people with severe disabilities.

Great Lakes Naval Base is one of the largest employers of people who are deaf or hard of hearing in the Chicago area, according to Andrew Fernandez, director of Anixter Center's Vocational Services, which includes JobWorks. "Great Lakes Naval Base is very committed to helping its employees succeed. The turnover of its employees who are deaf is very low, compared to other employees," he says. Andrew believes the fact that Great Lakes has assigned a dedicated case manager to assist these employees on site is a key factor in its success. The Naval Base also uses video relay services in the galleys to facilitate communication.



JobWorks consumer Constance Ezell accepts a position from Kathy Simons, intake manager, Goodwill Great Lakes *Photo courtesy of David Price*

Philanthropy Update

In support of Anixter Center's Adult Community Transition Program

Highland Park Community Foundation
Progressive Services Network

In support of Anixter Center's Educational and Therapeutic Services

Grant Healthcare Foundation

In support of Anixter Center's Programs and Services

Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust
General Iron/Lee & Nathan Rosenmutter Foundation
Chicago Transit Authority Helping Hands

In support of Chicago Hearing Society's Audiology Program

Polk Bros. Foundation
Grant Healthcare Foundation

In support of Chicago Hearing Society's CHOICES for Parents Coalition

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Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation

In support of Chicago Hearing Society's Domestic Violence Program

Kraft Employee Fund

In support of Chicago Hearing Society's Programs and Services

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In support of Chicago Hearing Society's Youth Program

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Annual Luncheon Awards



Rita Bakewell, Spirit of Life award winner

Rita Bakewell accepted the first award of the day, the *Lester and Rosalie Anixter Spirit of Life Award*. "Rita joined Anixter Center's Board of Directors in 1985, has served as board chair and her contributions are numerous," said Reneé Lumpkin in presenting the award.

An exceptional level of commitment to individuals with disabilities earned Illinois Rep. Karen May (D-58) this year's *Stuart G. Ferst Legislator of the Year Award*. Said Anixter Center President and CEO Allan Bergman in presenting the award, "Responding to the success of the Adult Community Transition (ACT) Program and the increasing demand and waiting list for community integration, Rep. May made the critical difference in securing increased funding for the expansion of the ACT program this year."

Emphasizing the important role that the media plays in educating the public about people with disabilities, Allan presented the *Media Champion Award* to Gary Taylor, associate editor of the **Evanston Review** and the **Wilmette Life**, two of the weekly newspapers of the Pioneer Press.



Carol Goddard of the Pioneer Press

Carol Goddard, North Shore bureau chief of the Pioneer Press, which numbers 64 weeklies in all, accepted the award.

Joe Wren, a friend to Anixter Center for more than seven years, received the *Sheldon L. Siegel Volunteer of the Year Award*. Joe's computer expertise has benefited Anixter Center program participants and staff members alike.

Describing her as "our Anixter Angel," Director of Sales Chris Math presented the *Distinguished Service Award* to Bettie Binkley Lee. Bettie has given graciously and generously of her time and energy to help expedite orders for Anixter Center's Imaging Business.

Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, Inc., this year's *Employer of the Year*, is an exemplary partner in assisting individuals with disabilities to secure what most of us seek – a successful role in the world of work. Paul Church of the Westin O'Hare Hotel accepted the award on behalf of Starwood from Karen Malina, assistant manager of Anixter Center North.



Rep. Karen May (D-58) and Allan I. Bergman



Joe Wren and Dale Singleton, director, Systems Administration



Bettie Binkley Lee and Chris Math

The *Customer of the Year Award* was presented to Tom Knibbs, president of Urban Accents. The gourmet spice company displays a commitment to Anixter Center's Packaging Business by continually increasing the amount of business allocated to Anixter Center.

Anixter Center's partnership with the Center for Accessibility Resources at Northern Illinois University is one in which the shared goal is to create a universally accessible environment in which individuals are viewed on the basis of ability, not disability. Sheila Milan of the Center for Accessibility accepted the *Partners Through Progress Award* from Anixter Center's Liz Kaige.



Top to bottom: Tom Knibbs and Chris Math; Paul Church and Karen Malina; and Sheila Milan and Liz Kaige

On-the-job success with JobWorks

Finding the easy way has never been Jimmy Napier's style. He has faced many challenges, including being deaf since birth. Jimmy's determination and can-do attitude help him succeed at his job in Convention Services at the Sheraton Chicago. Jimmy found his position through Anixter Center's JobWorks Program, a vocational program that focuses on pre- and post-placement services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. During his five years at the Sheraton, Jimmy has been honored as *Employee of the Month* several times.

Jimmy explains his outlook this way: "You can't take it easy. Take risks, be active and continue moving forward. Just keep doing what you need to do to survive and don't go back."

Jimmy's relationship with Anixter Center began more than 17 years ago when he trained to become a janitor through the organization's Maintenance Training Program. Jimmy later met JobWorks specialist Sarah Michaelson when he was referred to JobWorks. He was hired at the Sheraton Chicago in 2000 after working in a janitorial position for 12 years at another hotel. The Sheraton didn't have an opening in Maintenance, so Jimmy opted for a position in Convention Services. Job responsibilities include setting up for parties, banquets, conferences and other special events.

Jimmy's job requires a good amount of heavy lifting of tables and chairs, which is no problem for the tall, self-effacing man. "I really enjoy working at the Sheraton," he says. "They give me a lot of responsibility and I enjoy the variety. It's not the same thing every day," he says with a smile, recalling the time that he helped set up for a dinner attended by the President of the United States.

Communicating with hearing co-workers is a challenge for any person who is deaf. That challenge is even greater for Jimmy because many of his peers are not native English speakers and have little exposure to sign language. To solve the problem, the Sheraton consulted with JobWorks Specialist David Price and



Jimmy Napier began working in Convention Services at the Sheraton Chicago in 2000

SooHyun Tak, manager of Social Services and Advocacy at Chicago Hearing Society. David and SooHyun presented a workshop for Jimmy's entire department to offer tips for working and communicating with a co-worker who is deaf. They addressed specific issues, such as how to get the attention of a person who is deaf. They also demonstrated a few basic signs. "It was tremendously helpful in making sure we addressed Jimmy's needs and concerns under the Americans with Disabilities Act," says the hotel's Human Resources Manager Gina Meier. The Sheraton Chicago has employed several JobWorks consumers in various positions.

Technology also helps Jimmy. He communicates with his manager and with Sarah at JobWorks using a special pager that allows him to send text messages to an e-mail address, cell phone or another pager. "I know a few American Sign Language words, but most of the time we write or type out what we want to say," says Jimmy's manager, Alex Cotto, Sheraton Chicago Convention Services floor manager. Alex offers high praise for his employee. "Jimmy came to us highly recommended and he was very eager to work. He showed a great interest and aptitude for the job – more so than many hearing people. That attitude is one we really appreciate"

Jimmy is proud of the distinctions he has received as *Employee of the Month*. "The awards make me want to work harder. My goal is to keep climbing and keep achieving. I don't want to go back to where I was," he says of his life before JobWorks.

Your contribution to Anixter Center will benefit people with disabilities.

Please visit www.anixter.org
or call (773) 973-7900, ext. 226, voice, (773) 973-2180, TTY.



Adult Community Transition Program receives \$25,000 grant

In December 2005, Progressive Services Network, a Chicagoland nonprofit organization that supports the best in community-based programs for adults with special needs, presented a \$25,000 check to the Adult Community Transition (ACT) Program in Highland Park. On hand for the presentation were (from left to right): Anixter Center Vice President of Programs Carol Woodworth; Anixter Center President and CEO Allan I. Bergman; Progressive Services Network Executive Director Larry Markin; Anixter Center North Director Jack Creagh; and ACT program participant Daniel Frownfelter.

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The mission of the Lester and Rosalie Anixter Center is to assist people with disabilities to live and work successfully in the community. Anixter Center is a leading provider of high-quality vocational, residential and educational options, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and health care. Anixter Center is an advocate for the rights of people with disabilities to be full and equal members of the community.

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Allan I. Bergman, President and CEO

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*Assisting people with
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