

CEO's CORNER

by Todd Dunnington

Everywhere you look today, you see the emphasis government and business leaders are placing on "collaboration." I would argue that a similar emphasis on collaboration is being incorporated within the non-profit world. While there are no simple answers, collaboration is typically part of a preferred solution. Our lead article in this newsletter highlighting the success story of Becky Thomas is an excellent example. She is an intern with our Aerospace Internship Program (AIP). The AIP works because there is collaboration from multiple stakeholders. First, let me be clear: Becky's success is in large part due to her own inner strength and motivation. Surrounding Becky, however, is the collaboration of the Enumclaw School District, family members, and a host of mentors at Skills Inc. Becky thrived because there was collaboration and a clear focus on an outcome: Becky's success. We are proud of the twelve students that flourished at Skills Inc. this year and look forward to expanding the program by 50% next year.

Collaboration requires checking your "ego" at the door and focusing on the end result or outcome attempting to be achieved. When independent parties come together to achieve a result that is outside of any one party's control, that's to be celebrated. This newsletter also describes the story of the Summer Youth Employment Program. It is yet another example of collaboration -- this time between

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ALL IN A DAY'S WORK:

A Family Affair



From left: Annie Thomas and Becky Thomas

Becky Thomas, an Enumclaw High School senior, started in the Skills Inc. Aerospace Internship Program (AIP) last September. She is one of the twelve students who has successfully participated in this program during the 2008-2009 academic year. Becky's happy disposition and dedication to her work has really contributed to her overall success. Her older sister Annie completed the AIP program two years ago, and continues to grow her skills in the shot peen area.

The AIP, which began in 2001, serves 10-12 high school students from around the area to work at the Auburn facility for four hours a day. For most of the students, high school life is a real struggle. AIP is a great alternative to earn the same school credits as their peers, while learning practical real-life skills.

Like all AIP students, Becky began at Skills Inc. by rotating through different departments for the first couple of months then was able to choose a department that best fit her strengths. Becky has been in penetrant inspection since November, and loves the diversity of the job.

"There's lots of things to do. If I get tired of one, there's two other things I could be doing," said Becky.

Becky has worked through several personal challenges, such as reading and interpreting paperwork. With the support of a strong team that includes mentors, supervisors and co-workers, she has really flourished, and will continue to work at Skills Inc. after gradua-

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Tournament

Attention:

The publication schedule for Skills Inc. has changed to the following:
Spring and Fall Newsletter
and an Annual Report to be published in January

Make sure to check out
our recently updated
website:

www.skillsinc.com

AIP 2008-2009: Moving On

As the school year comes to an end, so does another year of the Skills Inc. Aerospace Internship Program (AIP). This year, twelve students completed the program and eight will graduate. The graduating students have a variety of plans for next year; including returning to Skills Inc. for a second year in the AIP, joining the military, and attending college in the fall. In addition, two of the students have accepted full-time employment positions at Skills Inc.

Under the watchful eye of Wayne Branson, students have learned what it is like to work in "the real world" learning valuable skills they can apply in the future. All of the students agree that Skills Inc. has made a difference in their lives. Jake, an Enumclaw HS student, said the AIP program allowed him to see what an actual workplace was like and helped him develop a good work ethic. He especially enjoys working with his mentor, Matt, who

not only taught Jake how to work in the metal shop but has taught Jake some sign language that he has already been able to use in his everyday life.

Nick, a student from Federal Way, says Skills Inc. has taught him how to correctly interact with his supervisors and co-workers. Jason, a graduating student, says that his experience here at Skills Inc. has made him feel better about himself. "I don't think I would be graduating if it wasn't for this program. Before I heard about the AIP, I was planning on dropping out." Jason will be the first person in his family to graduate from high school. We are very proud of all the students.

-Missy Parkinson, Program Coordinator



Back Row (from left): Richard Widener, Wayne Branson, Becky Thomas, Jonathan Bravo, Missy Parkinson
Front Row (from left): Paco Solano-Diaz, Larry Martin, Nick King, Jason Cook

EVERYONE BENEFITS!

Initiating Change at Skills Inc.

In business, successful change is often referred to as continuous improvement and starts with someone raising their hand and saying "I have an idea that could result in a positive change." Most improvements start with employees who are engaged in the work. This is exactly what transpired and resulted in a positive change at Skills Inc.

Dave White and Chris Arfman initiated change with our hazardous material handling process. This was not a task to take lightly, given that we dispose of 200,000 pounds of waste a year. We take extreme care and caution in waste disposal to ensure it is disposed of properly and safely. The cost of disposal exceeds \$300,000 a year (that's a lot of responsibility).

Dave and Chris looked at the current process of disposing waste and knew they could find a safer and more cost-effective disposal method. They met with several waste disposal companies and found one that would partner with Skills Inc. to ensure the waste could be safely collected and disposed of, utilizing a dedicated 20 ft. roll-off box compared to the old smaller flexbins. The metal roll-off box is lined to eliminate the risk of leakage; it can hold a larger volume of waste and costs less than the small cardboard flexbins. Their efforts streamlined operations and have truly made Skills Inc. a cleaner, safer, and more cost-effective business.

A positive change has occurred at Skills Inc. and it never would have happened without the efforts of these employees who said, "I have an idea that could result in a positive change." We view continuous improvement as part of our operations. Thanks Dave and Chris!

-Robert Copeland, Director of Finance and Administration

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Skills Inc., the City of Seattle, the Seattle School District, Mainstay (a career support agency), and the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. I can't think of a better way to keep young adults focused than to give them a job. We are thrilled to partner and collaborate with these other organizations on this special program.

Skills Inc. is a thriving social enterprise. When we are doing our best work, we are collaborating with our enterprise customers to come up with unique solutions that meet their needs. Our best experiences tend to be in situations where we work with customers who are good at communicating their requirements and expectations and open to new value-added steps that we can provide. Come to think of it, running a business is not so different than striving to achieve outcomes that are motivated by a social mission! Partnership and collaboration can make all the difference.

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tion. Her near-term goal is to become a Level 1 inspector, which means being able to do all of her tasks unsupervised. Beyond graduation, Skills Inc. will continue to provide vocational services for Becky to help support her transition into the workforce. Becky has some long-term goals as well.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Jim McBay says, "It has been a pleasure to work with Becky. She is a dedicated worker and I don't know anyone who doesn't like Becky. The staff and program at Skills have provided her with the opportunity, and Becky has used that opportunity to learn the skills to be an outstanding employee."

Becky and Annie also have a younger brother who is interested in applying to the AIP next year. The AIP has been a great success for the Thomas family and we hope it will be as successful for future students.

-Genevieve Seidensticker, Vocational Services Coordinator

Skills Inc. Vocational Services Broadens Its Reach



NORTHWEST CENTER Networking Open House

Skills Inc. attended this event hosted by Northwest Center on Thursday, May 28th. It was a great opportunity to network with our peers and to learn more about each other's organizations. Like Skills Inc., Northwest Center is a Social Enterprise, which is a business model that is focused on generating revenues through producing commercial goods and services to achieve a social aim. Making a profit is fundamental to sustaining and growing programs that increase the social profit for both organizations. This makes it possible to meet the needs of constituents by creating opportunities for persons with disabilities. Doing "good" is great but building long-lasting systems that promote measurable outcomes creates a more lasting effect in our community. Clearly, there is great value in building collaborative relationships and partnerships to accomplish more significant impact. As Harvard Business School professor Jane Weiskillern stated, "a more powerful lever to increase a nonprofit's social impact might be to focus on building network relationships with like-minded groups—even competitors." —Cheryl Roe, Director of Programs and Development

Skills Inc. Vocational Services currently includes Community Based Assessments, Job Placement, and Job Retention Services. These services are integrated throughout our operations, programs and community job placements. We have been successfully working with high school students in our Aerospace Internship Program (AIP) since 2001. The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) provides an opportunity for Skills Inc. to play a role in supporting students out in the community and through summer employment internships at our Ballard and Auburn Facilities.

The Workforce Development Council (WDC) of Seattle-King County received an infusion of \$3 million in stimulus money to be put towards summer jobs for more than 850 low-income and at-risk youth in King County. Both the City of Seattle and King County have youth employment programs in place that will be expanded through the stimulus money. However, the WDC is leading an extensive effort to connect with local employers and nonprofits that can benefit from this program. It is a "win-win"—the youth receive a bona fide work experience, and businesses gain enthusiastic participants whose wages are subsidized.

Because of our partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), we are working with other agencies and stakeholders committed to this endeavor. Skills Inc. recently hired Genevieve (Genny) Seidensticker (pictured above) as the Vocational Services Coordinator to support this program. She works closely with Adriana Tossini



Genevieve Seidensticker, Vocational Services Coordinator

of DVR and Sharon Keene of Mainstay. They have spent the last several weeks preparing approximately 20 high school students from schools including Chief Sealth and Franklin for the SYEP.

These students will work for seven weeks in paid, part-time positions in a variety of jobs with the City of Seattle. Most of these students have never held a job. This program allows them to earn money, build their confidence and make connections in their community that could open doors for future careers. Genny will be supporting the students and the employers to ensure a successful internship. Work experiences are immensely valuable for young people, teaching them both job and social skills that are essential for long-term success. Assessing and monitoring their progress throughout this process will be essential to measure soft skills, work tolerance, specific learning needs and any accommodations. Skills Inc. is committed to partnering with other agencies, organizations and businesses to benefit the youth in our community. —Cheryl Roe, Director of Programs and Development

"Bowling with Bounds" Fundraiser Tournament

Skills Inc. held its second annual "Bowling with Bounds" bowling tournament at Kenmore Lanes on March 8th, 2009. We had over 140 bowlers and raised nearly \$15,000. We also had an opportunity to honor the memory of Walter Crow, a founding board member of Skills. His wife Dona Crow accepted a plaque which recognized his contribution to Skills Inc. KING5's Dennis Bounds, Rich Marriott, Allen Schauffler and Mike Blakey along with KJR 950 talk show host Ian Furness helped to make the day extra fun and special. Thanks to all of our volunteers, donors and sponsors who helped to make this event a great success! See you next year!

SKILLS INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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From left: **Ian Furness** of Sports Radio 950 KJR AM; employee **Sharon Gowdy**; host **Dennis Bounds**, KING5 News Anchor; and emcee **Rich Marriott**, KING5 TV Meteorologist. (Photo courtesy of Emily Wen)

Thank you for your support in making
"Bowling with Bounds" a great success!

- KINGS TV
- Kenmore Lanes
- Quality Factory
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- Dr. Robert Willkens
- Zozart



SKILLSGOLF
INC. *FOURTH ANNUAL*
Tournament

SAVE THE DATE

When: Friday, September 25th, 2009

Where: Druids Glen Golf Club

Time: Check-in 7am
Play Starts at 8am

Fee: \$130.00 per player

Info: Contact Monica Lucero
at 206.782.6000 or email
Monical@skillsinc.com

Register: www.skillsinc.com

Entry deadline: 08/30/09



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