

# PROMISING PRACTICES



## ProAct provides Life Opportunities for young adults

As human service providers, we all depend on the input of consumers and our other stakeholders to help us improve the quality and determine the future of our services. The input of family members, guardians, and professionals who have spent quality time with the consumers is essential to service and program planning. ProAct, Inc., of Eagan, Minnesota, used the expertise of these core groups in a unique way to create a new and innovative program to meet the needs of an underserved population in the St. Croix County area of Wisconsin. ProAct leadership and a group of parents and teachers worked together to create ProAct's newest program, called Life Opportunities, for young adults with disabilities after high school.

The parents and teachers had completed a process of interviewing and touring provider organizations, and they chose ProAct to turn their dreams into a reality. The tour of ProAct's Eagan program facility and headquarters convinced the parents that the organization's style is to work with persons served to help them in achieving their personal goals rather than to fit them into pre-existing and sometimes sedentary programs. Seizing the opportunity, ProAct met with the parents and teachers to learn more about their goals and ideas for meeting the needs of these young adults.

Completely based in the community, ProAct's Life Opportunities program mixes work and recreational therapy in multiple settings and teaches life skills to better



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### Putting Out the Good Word: Some Information about the Promising Practices Series

We are offering a series of short articles on a variety of promising practices that CARF surveyors have observed during surveys from 2004 to the present. There is no particular order that we will follow in presenting this series of short reports. The purpose is not to rate one organization over another, but to encourage U.S. and Canadian community providers to dialogue with one another and to encourage creative solutions to individual service designs and organizational business practices and thereby achieve effective and positive results in each organization's

equip people with disabilities for productive lives. The young adults just out of high school learn healthy living skills through a balanced program of exercise, work, play, and healthy eating. Chores around one of the community-based sites, The Stables, provide a counterpoint to therapeutic horseback riding; shopping for and preparing a healthy lunch make good choices routine; regular exercise through structured activities at the local YMCA doesn't feel like work; and community-based work at a restaurant dishware distribution business all combine to enhance skill development, teamwork, and a healthy lifestyle for young adults with disabilities.



Parent involvement is key to the success of this unique program. In this situation, one parent owns the dishware business where the participants work, and another owns The Stables, a local horse

farm. In other communities, similar programs might have a different look and feel. However, the satisfaction comes from being able to have significant input into designing services that fit the participants involved and using opportunities in the local community. On a daily basis, there are choices and compromises, skills to be developed, and enthusiasm to be channeled into life lessons, as well as issues of compatibility to be negotiated and resolved. However, increased self-sufficiency skills and basic training related to employment options will ensure that the program continues to be relevant for the participants. The future of this program is bright, and ProAct could not provide such a successful program without the passion and contributions of the involved parents and teachers.

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For further information, please contact Carolyn Dobis, Director of Programs & Services at ProAct's Eagan facility, at (651) 686-0312.

[www.proactinc.org](http://www.proactinc.org)

community.

Although there are indeed a number of ways to approach conformance to a standard, what makes organizations given an exemplary rating stand out is their professional and strategic response to an observed service or business need, always designed with input from their stakeholders and based on those individuals' quality expectations.

We hope you enjoy the series. We encourage you to contact the identified representative in the article to get more information about their services.

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