

SHELTERED WORKSHOP MANAGERS

Dignified and meaningful employment for people with disabilities...Quality services for Missouri.

Workshop Image Sometimes Incomplete for Outsiders

by MASWM President Brent Blackwell

The current climate is not always accurate when it comes to assessing the value of workshops.

Especially among outside observers, we sometimes see little recognition of the historic contribution by workshops. Others glibly speak of "community placements" as if they grow on trees. With these and other trends in mind, it's important to remember the huge range of services offered by workshops and their dedicated staffs.

In plain English, workshops offer a whole lot more than "just work." Here are a few examples:

- Managers and staff members, working with Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Sheltered Workshops of Missouri, ensure that employees with developmental disabilities work in an environment that is safe and comfortable.

- Nearly constant adjustments and adaptations are made to offer each individual employee the ability to work on jobs that he or she may otherwise not be able to do. This is done through the use of ergonomics, custom forms and other means to offer the employee a level of confidence and surety, which then develops and maintains pride in a job performed well.

- Equally important is the ability of managers and staff to look at any situation and be able to make necessary adjustments, whether for safety, simplification of a process or just to make an employee feel comfortable. These adaptations are a necessity and are successfully accomplished by workshops on a daily basis.

I think we should express a huge "thank you" for all those who think about and make these types of adjustments to better serve the individuals with developmental disabilities who work under our supervision.



MASWM President Brent Blackwell notes that descriptions of workshops often fall far short of reality.

DESE Summary Shows Workshop Results

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recently provided their workshop data summary for December 2014 and comparison to the previous month.

Those figures (with November numbers in parenthesis) are as follows:

- FY-15 Total Appropriation, \$25,283,457 (\$25,283,457)
- FY-15 Appropriation Withholds, \$1,243,504 (\$1,242,504)

- FY-15 Available Appropriations, \$24,039,953 (\$24,039,953)
- FY-15 Available as of Dec. 14, \$11,308,080 (\$13,154,650)
- FY-15 Average Monthly Expenditure, \$2,122,315 (\$2,177,061)
- FY-15 Projected funding, 5.33 months, 6.04 months = .67 mo. projected shortfall 3 weeks; 94 mo. projected shortfall = 4 weeks
- Certified Workers, 6,860 (6,830)

- FTE, 5,286 (5,280)
- Waiting List, 1,659 (1,658)
- Average Hourly Wage, \$3.73 (\$3.32)
- YTD, \$3.32 (\$3.25)
- Hours Worked CP, 602,955 (756,775)
- YTD, 4,141,731 (3,538,776)
- Vocational Training Hours. CP, 23,136 (18,079)
- YTD, 97,677 (74,550)

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Retirement Brings Look Back at Workshop History, Successes

Long-time MASWM member and officer Bob Engemann is among the outstanding leaders who will soon retire.

Executive Director of TEMCO in Marthasville, located in Warren County, Engemann began his workshop career in 1989. He admits the changes have been many.

“The biggest thing was Medicaid

Waiver,” he said. “That had recently come on board prior to my beginning. Supported employment was becoming popular, along with that program being well funded on the federal level.”

Engemann came to nonprofit workshops following his career in manufacturing for private industry with an accounting and a purchasing management background. “Workshops are a continuation of manufacturing, but you bring in the human factor to a larger degree,” he noted. “There’s still that ‘all-important’ customer contact; you still do quality awareness, payroll, HR. It’s a business, but you also have that huge human services component.”

Sometimes the mix of these is, well, unusual. Engemann notes one case where he returned from testifying before a legislative committee in Jefferson City and was in the midst of updating his staff when an employee reported an overflowing toilet. “Managing a workshop is a lot like being a small business owner,” he noted. “You do it all.”

Engemann said he is concerned with the future of workshops although he is hopeful change will bring positive results, too. He noted that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a good example. While some of the proposals are positive, many people may overlook the extensive costs that will be involved through this mandate.

“There’s an ‘implementation cost’ involved,” he said. “But the funding isn’t there currently. That’s a big concern.”

Workshops also offer significant and



Bob Engemann (left) has been a workshop manager and MASWM leader for years. He was recently honored by Association members, including President Brent Blackwell who presented Engemann a plaque at the October meeting.

unique advantages. “I’ve always thought this is an ideal training ground for employees who are new to ‘the work environment,’” he noted. “They are instructed on and learn things from workshop staff like punctuality, safety, teamwork and quality awareness. Most people got that at home at a young age when mother directed them to, ‘remember to do the dishes after dinner’ or on their first job. Our employees may not have had that introduction, so it’s important that they have those experiences as they enter the workforce world.”

Typical of Engemann’s dedication, his retirement plans are a little indefinite because he wants to make sure his workshop is in good hands. He feels he has an excellent staff in place currently. Turning 66 next fall, Engemann hopes to do some traveling.

Groups Discuss Joint Issues

The joint committee of MASWM and the Missouri Association of County Developmental Disabilities Services (MACDDS) met again on Oct. 22 in Columbia. Members of the Missouri Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (MARF) were also in attendance. Carl Calkins and Tom McVeigh from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development moderated.

The focus was on finding common ground for the groups to address legislation that has the potential to change the landscape of employment across the nation for individuals with developmental disabilities. The meeting began with general discussion of outcomes then broke into three groups for an analysis of issues and selecting the three top priorities.

The major issues discussed included supporting a range of individualized, flexible employment options; a system without walls; a unified voice; and a proactive stance while respecting individual choice.

Another meeting is planned for February. This meeting will include DESE, DMH, and VR. Plans are to then hold a “Spring Summit,” similar to the one held April, to begin putting plans into action. The summit would include members from MASWM, MACDDS, and representatives of MARF, state legislators, DESE, DMH, VR, and other stakeholders. The committee is considering a speaker to set the tone for these goals.

Repurposing Books Helps Provide Employment

BooksKC has been awarded for “Outstanding Sheltered Workshop Recycling” by the Missouri Recycling Association.

Operated by the Rehabilitation Institute of Kansas City since 2012, BooksKC has recycled or repurposed over 1,000 tons of books while maintaining the Rehabilitation Institute’s

mission to build brighter futures for individuals with disabilities.

The book-recycling project employs nine full-time and 22 part-time workshop clients as well as four staff members. BooksKC receives donated books from libraries, businesses, universities, and local Kansas City residents.