



Enable Inc.

Get **Connected** to a Worthwhile Cause

Building your business is all about being connected. Some connections can yield more than just expanding your business.



"If you're looking to get connected—consider connecting to a business with an important cause. Not only can your business give back to the community, but it can lead to making connections that are life changing," comments Sharon Copeland, executive director of Enable, Inc.

Enable, a non-profit that has been providing services and supports to over 450 persons with disabilities, and their families, throughout central New Jersey for 20 years, has an initiative called "Connect with Enable." It started in 2003 after getting a request from one of the persons Enable served who had cerebral palsy said, "My wish for this holiday season is not just another shirt. I would really like to have someone visit me who isn't paid to do so."

This young man who lived in his own apartment, mobilized Enable's effort to find persons in the community who would be willing to visit, interact, or help out in some way. Research has shown that even though more persons with disabilities are living in our backyards, many remain isolated. One national survey reported that 8 out of ten residents with disabilities have no regular social contacts with non-disabled people. Further, when the general population has more interaction with individuals with disabilities, there is greater understanding, acceptance and involvement of people with disabilities in everyday activities and events.

Businesses have stepped up with resounding support in many ways. Financial support for Connect with Enable began in 2004 from Janssen (a Division of Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc.) and has continued since. In 2006, Enable also received a one-time grant from the Princeton Area Community Foundation. Currently, Connect with Enable is primarily funded through fund raising efforts.

Employees from Bristol-Myers Squibb volunteer to weed, mulch, and plant flowers at a Mercerville home with persons with disabilities residents.

The initiative has grown to 438 volunteers in 2010 from businesses, schools, faith-based congregations and youth groups, as well as individuals, who gave over 3,820 hours of service. The Construction Financial Management Association recently painted inside two group homes and planted fall flowers. Last fall, 15 employees from Johnson & Johnson Sales & Logistics Company during J&J's "National Community Week," did weeding, planted mums, stained the fence and spruced up the yard with pumpkins and seasonal decorations. They also donated gift baskets filled with J&J products tailored to each woman's interests. Jon Troy, coordinator for the day, so impressed with the work his team accomplished said, "Thanks for taking the day to give back to others. I am certain that the women will feel their days are a bit brighter from the work we did and the gifts we provided."

Recently, Jerry Fennelly of NAI Fennelly Associates, Inc. and his family became connected with Enable. Their family prepared and served a Thanksgiving meal to five men residing in Ewing. "I believe our meal was a huge hit. The men were a joy and the staff was a big help as well," Nancy Fennelly shared.

Alex Jackson of Princeton, NJ, has two roles at Enable. She is a Friendly Assistant helping "Linda", a woman in her 80s with a visual impairment. Alex assists with grocery shopping. "I hope to have half her energy when I'm her age. I will never again complain about going grocery shopping or cooking," commented Alex. Her second role as a volunteer is serving on Enable's Board of Directors. As a new board member, Alex stated, "I felt it was time for me to give back to others. I am glad I can work with an agency with a mission I believe in."

For the past six summers, teams of high schoolers from JusticeworX of The Center for FaithJustice, have assisted at Enable's Day Program in Princeton. They play games, do crafts, share a meal and make friendships with participants. The facilitator, Nicole Patrick, remarked, "My experiences at the program have taught me the importance of sharing love with others. It's not in anyone's job

description; but it's one of the most important things you can give."

The work done by volunteers translates to dollars saved for Enable as well. According to the Independent Sector, the estimated dollar value of a volunteer hour in 2009 was \$20.85. Thus, the 3,820 hours of service provided by volunteers translates into a "donation" of \$79,647. In addition to volunteer hours, some businesses and groups donate supplies used by their volunteers or provide items needed by persons with disabilities. McGraw Hill supplied mulch and flowers when their employees worked at a home. Bloomberg contributed gift baskets for all residents at Enable's group homes during the holidays, following several visits where they worked with residents and day program participants.

"We are grateful for the involvement of businesses and individuals at Enable. They are directly contributing to a better quality of life for the people we serve," said Kirsten Yard, Enable's

community engagement coordinator. "We have a variety of ways to 'get connected.' Two of our urgent needs are for friendly assistants or helping with our annual walk. Walk 'N Roll with Enable is an indoor walk that includes persons with and without disabilities. It will take place on February 27, 2011 at PEAC Health & Fitness in Ewing." Yard works with each group or individual to match what they can do with an existing need.

Enable offers a variety of community based programs that promote inclusion, independence, and an improved quality of life for individuals with disabilities and the elderly. It provides in-home services and supports, group homes, day programs, respite care and other options.

If you or your business, group, school, or congregation is interested in "getting connected" with Enable, contact Yard at kyard@enablenj.org or 609-987-5003 x124 and please visit www.enablenj.org. ■

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