

# Great Game Huddle Notes

March 20, 2018

Our guest speakers today were Jane Kraft and Aileen Dresser from Abilities First.

Abilities First is a non-profit organization that helps the developmentally disabled find and keep jobs. They turn disabilities into opportunities by inclusion.

The organization has been around since 1979 and is grant funded by local agencies that help to support:

- Early intervention
- Residential Services
- Independent living assistance
- Employment
- Transportation

There is a long list of agencies that benefit from this funding. In 2016 and 2017 the percentage of the population that has some kind of developmental disability has increased from 2% to 6.99%. Some of the more common disabilities are Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy and Autism.

Fundraising is a very important part of the Abilities First. They are hosting two this year. The Ride on 2018 and the Silver Strands celebration.

Abilities First operates the First Steps Early Intervention Program in South Central Missouri through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. First Steps serves children from birth to age 3 and provides families with the tools needed to help children reach their highest potential.

In 2004 a Targeted Case Management Program known as The Next Step was started. The Support Coordinators help developmental disabilities and their families identify and prioritize their wants and needs and help them find the supports needed to reach their goals.

They also have their Art Inspired Academy Class which help students express themselves which include:

- Music
- Theatre
- Art
- Movement
- Pre-employment

Inspired Boutique is an upscale resale shop that carries:

- Name brand women's clothing
- Jewelry
- Collectibles
- Household Items
- Furniture

The Abilities First Employment Solutions helps people grow through skills training and on the job experience. They also try to match the apprentice with an employer for a more long term opportunity.

The Artesian Elements is a creative non-profit business under Abilities First Employment Services providing inclusive employment at a competitive wage. The use of recycled paper comes into play in making the following items that can be sold:

- Custom Wall Tiles
- Countertops
- Sinks
- Landscape Edging
- Commercial/Residential Planters

A sample of these designs can be found at the Commission Office where a wall was created with our Greene County Commission logo. Also this was duplicated down in the Public Administrators office and was used on the reception area desk.

When you are told that you would never be able to work in the outside world because of your disability Abilities First is giving them the opportunity to turn this around. They are helping to get rid of the stereotype that because of the disability they are not capable of any type of significant accomplishment.

The clearer picture is you are giving the employees a chance to be included and for that they are extremely grateful that they are given their first real job experience to learn the basic skills that will help them in the future.

It was an excellent presentation and we would like to thank Jane and Aileen for their time.

Join us next week for the Awards Huddle in the PSC building – see you there.