

# Quest



Newsletter of Industrial Opportunities, Inc.

## Industrial Opportunities, Inc. 1995 - 2004

With 2024 being Industrial Opportunities, Inc.'s 50th year of serving Cherokee, Clay & Graham counties, the Quest newsletters this year will focus on the history of IOI. Each newsletter will cover a decade. Industrial Opportunities, Inc. would like to thank you for your continued support in serving our community.

**1995** - IOI ranked above state average in job placement in both the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Program. IOI expanded a building by 2,500 sq. ft. allowing space for the leather department and raw inven-

The Government Contract Division is still productive and profitable. October was a record breaking month with sales of \$245,000. IOI had 55 people in the ADAP Program. 47% of the people served by the vocational rehabili-

Melvin R. Lane Foundation for packing equipment for the Barnett hardware Division.

**1998** - IOI continues to look at options to move to a bigger facility. The number of adults with disabilities that IOI is serving without funding from the state continues to grow. IOI is sponsoring 30 people in the program without funding. Elastic Products broke the sales record in the month of July with \$356,773 in sales. IOI moved the line multi-loop and tow strap operations to the Carolina Dress building on Qualla Road in Clay County. In September, IOI had 156 people working.

quired by the Department of Defense.

**2001** - With the award of a \$5.5 million dollar contract from the Department of Defense, IOI's Government Contract Division moves to a larger facility in Murphy. One of IOI's clients is chosen as Special Olympics Ambassador - she's the first ambassador from Cherokee County.



Laura Hays



Marble Plant

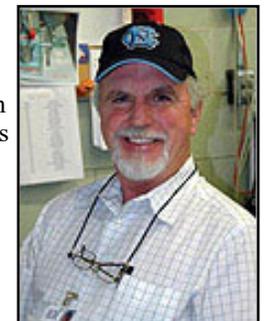
tory storage. The payroll system went to bar codes so that each worker will take the tag, place it on their work sheet and each day their work will be scanned in the payroll system by barcodes. IOI received a three-year CARF accreditation. Department of Defense orders for line multi-loops were profitable for the year and allowed IOI to hire additional people. IOI received a safety award and our workers compensation insurance dropped 20%. The Employment Security Commission chose IOI as "Employer of the Year". Clients served totaled 143.

tation program were placed on jobs, the state average was 33%. The School Transition Program began at IOI with three students attending four hours per day. Client served totaled 143.

**1997** - The last of the government contracts were completed on 2/5/97. Utilization was up to 84% and 42 people were placed on jobs. IOI's first marketing brochure was done featuring our labor force. We finalized the packing contract with Barnett Hardware out of Jacksonville, FL. This contract is expected to bring in approximately \$200,000 per year. A building proposal was presented to the Board. With MGM Brakes, the Barnett Division and the growth in the Elastic Products Division, we are running out of room. The option were presented as buying, building or leasing. Mr. Fuller at Carolina Dress donated one-half interest in a building in Clay County to IOI. We received a \$17,000 grant from the

**1999** - IOI celebrated our Twenty-Fifth Anniversary! Murphy business owners added \$5,000 to the IOI Endowment. IOI serves 150 trainees annually with a staff of 23. The Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce awards IOI with the "Employer of the Year" award, recognizing them for providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. NISH South presented IOI with the President's Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to the employment of people with severe disabilities through the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program.

**2002** - IOI begins contract packaging work with Sioux Tools of Murphy. Tri-County Community College presents IOI students with certificates of achievement in recognition of the goals accomplished by and increased in the life skills assessments. VF



Joe Gibson

**1996** - IOI received a Vocation Rehabilitation paving grant for \$8,040. 85% of last year's placements are still working. Received our first work from MGM Brakes which allowed another area of training for the adults with disabilities. IOI received a 50% cut in workers compensation insurance due to our excellent safety record.

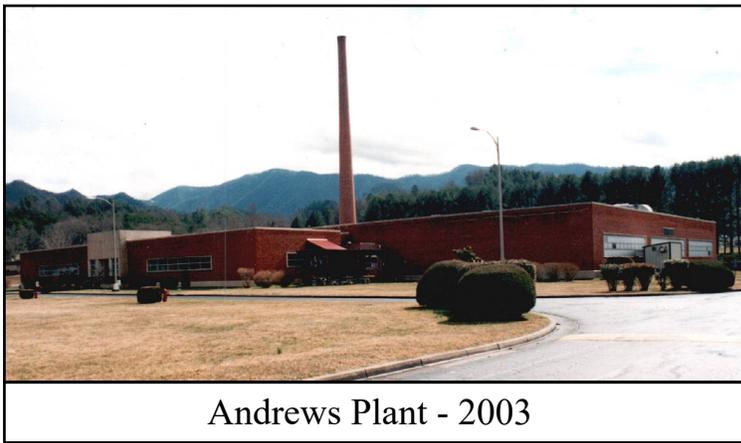
**2000** - IOI adds a computer lab. With the help of Tri-County Community College, we begin basic computer literacy classes focusing on logic and memory skills. We met our goal to get a wheelchair lift for on of our vans, thanks to our contributors. IOI's Government Contract Division becomes MIL-I compliant as re-

Jeanswear Plant Manager, Joe Gibson, suggested IOI should put in a bid to purchase the Andrews plant location. IOI serves 160 trainees with 27 staff member operating on a budget of \$4.1 million dollars and is 90% self-supported.



**2003** - IOI purchased the former VF Jeanswear building in Andrews, NC. After some renovations to the building, our move began in February. Shortly following the move, IOI began manufacturing Aerial Delivery Cargo Containers on a military contract, possibly one of our largest contracts ever. With an additional 65 employees, our workforce is over 200 workers. Our dream of building our enrichment center grows closer as IOI receives grants from multiple organizations to help us build.

**2004** - IOI celebrated it's 30th year of business. IOI was awarded a contract from the military to manufacture duffle bags and cold weather socks. Other products being produced included an automotive strap for BMW, blood



Andrews Plant - 2003

pressure cuffs, medical tourniquets, parachute deployment bags, line multi-loops, etc. IOI continued to do sub-assembly work for local manufacturers including MGM Brakes, Western Forge, Sioux Tools and MOOG. IOI received a grant for \$125,000 from the Golden Leaf Foundation, which was used to purchase an automated cutting

machine, a Gerber cutter. Construction on an enrichment center will be used for Life Skills, Therapeutic Art, will contain a quiet room and will also be used in the future for and Adult Day program. IOI had 243 employees and a budget of over \$6,500,000.

## Sharing Memories from the Past

Looking back my fondest memory is when I got to go to the pumpkin patch at Darnell Farms. That was the greatest day ever. I got to work with Tricia Slysyz and Kathy Grubb. It was so wonderful to see the excitement and joy on the clients faces to see them riding on the hayride. They also got to sit by the open fire pit and roast marshmallows and drink hot chocolate or apple cider and eat donuts. The most special part of the trip was when the clients got to pick a pumpkin to bring home and to see the joy and happiness and how appreciative they were to receive a gift from Darnell Farms.  
Lisa Rodriquez

When I went to work for IOI in March, 2001, Joe Gibson, Jim Maennle & Matt got me started sewing on a two needle machine sewing cargo bags. My mother-in-law, Brenda, would tack the cargo bags while wearing big red high heel shoes. She would tack and my mother, Doris Raper would glue. My husband, Jimmy, packed the cargo bags. One day, Mitchel Shields told me my daughter won the contest to design the Special Olympics T-shirts. I was so proud of her. Mrs. Parker was her school teacher at Hiwassee Dam High School. James was over the T-Shirts for Special Olympics at that time. Happy 50th IOI!  
Debbie Brown

My favorite times at IOI were being part of the clients track & field day. Just watching their activities will bless your heart and to see the excitement on their faces as they complete the activity of each challenge they participate in. Coming to work and seeing their smiling faces. No matter what they're going through they still muster up a smile. The challenges they have to go through each day we will never know, but you sure couldn't tell with the smiles on their faces.  
Carolyn Anderson

No time clocks (Honor system), Cake every month (on the floor), Green & yellow zippers for Tac Med's pouches, Country Day, it was special getting to know the clients for me, Margaret Rathbone's handwriting on the duffle bags-was so great and neat, Getting the Gerber and the opportunity to work on it.  
Jeanette O'Dell

Job Coaching memories, I had a young man we placed in Hayesville Ingles. As I job coached him he always did a great job bagging groceries. But the thing that stood out the most was he was great with the customers. He never let his disability stand in his way. After he was closed out for job coaching services, I saw him at Home Depot working in Customer Service. I asked him about the

move and he said they had a job opening and he needed to get off his feet, so he applied and got the job. The rest is some GREAT history he is still employed at Home Depot as of 6/22/2024. Trip to Jamestown NY with Harry. I received a call from Harry over the Christmas Holidays asking if I could go with him on a trip Jan 2 to Jamestown NY. This was the start to a Great partnership with The Resource Center. We looked at the A-22 cargo bag they wanted us to make. This helped fill the floor space at IOI today in Andrews. Since that time and start of the partnership we have made several items over the years for The Resource Center. Another big item that caused us to add a second shift at IOI was the 3 Mag pouch. We were cracking them out for them. Met a lot of good friends and working partners during this time. Sad to say on 5/2021 I lost my good friend and working partner Doug Winship with The Resource Center. Snow Day: During work it started snowing hard. Tom was trying to get vans back to get the clients home safe. A driver came in and said Tom I not driving to Robbinsville in this and put the keys on the front desk. Tom said "Maennle will you drive them home"? I side sure. Then as we head to Topton and the Brady curve there had been a wreck road closed and were sending traffic

## Quest Fellowship

- In honor of Tom O'Brien by Tom Sheridan
- In memory of Jack & Maxine Earley by Steve & Betty Massey
- In honor of Doug Earley by Steve & Betty Massey
- Congratulations on 50 years from:
  - Christopher & Lynnea Mumola
  - Margaret O'Brien Isidor
  - William O'Brien
  - Thomas & Amanda Sheridan
  - Steve & Joan O'Brien Law
  - Paul & Sarah O'Brien Gargaulo
- In honor of Tom O'Brien from Chris & Mary Jane Galvin
- In memory of William, Shirley & Dan O'Brien by Tom O'Brien
- In memory of Kathy Pruzinsky, Judy Sheridan & Kenny Isidor by Tom O'Brien
- In memory of Chris & Susan O'Brien by Tom O'Brien

## Supporters

- Maurice & Susann West
- Jack Smoot

around Red Marble Road, a pig trail LOL. This was fun once we made it to Robbinsville, I was thinking I need to stop on flat ground, or the van would be stuck. I got to Westwind Nursing Home and the drive was straight down a hill. I thought if I go down it I will be stuck for the night. So I stopped at the top of the hill in a flat area and walked Mary and then Audrey down the hill, we did the duck walk. They were home safe and a few more drop off, then back to IOI with some white knuckles. What a trip.

Jim Maennle

Find us on Facebook!



# Clients Serving IOI Since Third Decade

# Line-Multi Loop & A-22 Cargo Bag Production



These clients have been dedicated to Industrial Opportunities, Inc. since the third decade of business. Left to right: Ruby Jones (26 years of service), Melanie Stiles (25 years of service), Donna Earwood (28 years of service), Greg Ledford (27 years of service), Mary Laura Bandy (28 years of service), Claire Allison (21 years of service), Matthew Anderson (29 years of service), and Billy McGarr (20 years of service).



Line-Multi Loops used for airdrop of ammunition and supplies and A-22 Cargo Bags used by the U.S. Military.

In 2001, Industrial Opportunities, Inc. immediately ramped up manufacturing of Line-Multi Loops after receiving a large U.S. Military order from Defense Logistics Agency for airdrop of ammunition and supplies.

In 2003, Industrial Opportunities, Inc. moves into the VF Jeanswear Plant in Andrews, NC and immediately begins the manufacturing of the A-22 Cargo Bags. Until this point, IOI had never manufactured the A-22 Cargo Bags but a urgent and compelling request was issued by the Military.

All Gifts are Tax Deductible - Industrial Opportunities, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

### I make this gift:

- In memory or honor of \_\_\_\_\_.
- To benefit the client activity fund / IOI Endowment fund.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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