

Qwest

Newsletter of Industrial Opportunities, Inc.

Elastic Products 40 Year Anniversary

Mr. D. Joseph O'Connor granted such an opportunity to Industrial Opportunities, Inc. Born in early 1900, living his life in the Bridgeport and Easton area of Connecticut, died on January 23rd, 1992. To the best of our knowledge, he never visited Western North Carolina but he touched many lives and families here in Cherokee, Clay, and Graham counties.

In 1945, Mr. O'Connor joined the Red Star Company, which he purchased in 1952. In 1978, ready to retire, he dismantled and donated his company to the Elastic Products Division of Industrial Opportunities, Inc.

Since 1978, when the total year IOI production sales were \$25,019, the company donated to Elastic Products has produced over \$160,738,067 in sales.

But more important than the dollar amount is the number of lives that have been touched by his generosity. This past year 166 adults with dis-



abilities were served with an average of 100 people daily. Total employed, counting staff, production workers and clients is 288.

With the donated equipment and the goodwill of the Red Star Company name, the Elastic Products Division of Industrial Opportunities, Inc. started to build its customer base from customers Mr. O'Connor referred to IOI.

IOI treats best and brightest like royalty

Re-print from The Andrews Journal
By Kelsey Richardson

People screamed and clapped as the King entered the building. Industrial Opportunities, Inc. in Andrews held its annual awards ceremony Friday, followed by live Elvis-themed entertainment. More than 40 workers were presented with a certificate for completing one year of courses at Tri-County Community College. The college and IOI have partnered since 1974, offering classes like reading, speaking and listening, math, cooking and other basic courses. Each class is catered to the students' specific skill levels.

"I enjoy knowing individuals when they come in and seeing how much they've grown," IOI President Tom O'Brien said. Without the support of the college during the time IOI was established, he said the business wouldn't have made it. Dottie Strafford-Ortega, director of academic success and student engagement, spoke on behalf of the college, thanking everyone who helped make the program possible. She said when reflecting on the kindness and perseverance of the students, she finds herself reminded of "The Little Engine That Could." "I think I can," she said. "I think I can. I think I can. I know I can. This is what I see in everyone's eyes when I visit the classrooms." After all of the students received well-deserved recognition, the entertainment took an energetic turn. From "Jailhouse Rock" and



"Burning Love" to "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Don't Be Cruel," the students put on their best performances.

Wearing a voluminous wig and a bedazzled white outfit, Chad Phillips embodied Elvis. He strutted down the aisle of tables with confidence, dancing like a king of rock 'n' roll.

"I got lots of moves," Phillips said, showing them off.

The crowd cheered and clapped along, encouraging everyone while they danced.

"It's beyond description," Murphy Mayor Rick Ramsey said. "I love the talent and enthusiasm. Tom O'Brien, what he's doing with Tri-County Community College, is amazing, and it needs to be celebrated."

Amber Steele, IOI habilitation technician, said the students met months before the awards ceremony, practicing their dance routines for the big day.

"They like to entertain," she said. "We probably have one of the funnest jobs ever."



A special Thank You!

Thank you to Oak Forest UMW, Norma & David Wooden & Linda Boyles for the generous donation to enhance our activates in cooking class.





Chris O'Brien Track & Field Day

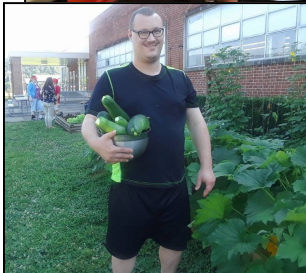
Industrial Opportunities, Inc.



Industrial Opportunities, Inc.
Track & Field Day Sponsors

Thank You for your support!

NC Forest Service
Tel-County Computer
Integrated Machining Class



IOI Benefits from Cannon Foundation, Inc. Grant

Industrial Opportunities, Inc. was able to purchase Transit Passenger Wagons with the assistance from the grant awarded by The Cannon Foundation, Inc. IOI now has six dependable, comfortable vans and can continue client community outings for Innovations Wavier/ADVP Programs as well as taking WIOA students for job exploration Pre-Employment Transition Services activities. Before adding the additional vans, the ADVP Program clients were not able to attend many outings due to van issues. Because of the new vans, the ADVP clients have now been able to double their outings. Now, clients have been able to enjoy outings together as a group instead of in shifts.

On average, there are around three outings a week with the sixty five ADVP and Innovations Wavier clients. With the new vans, they have had the opportunity to go on 150+ outings. Outings have included: Tai Chi, bowling tournament, fishing tournament, movies, shopping, out to eat, book readings at the local library and grocery shopping for cooking class. Sixty nine students have been served by the Pre-Employment Transition Services from September 2017 to April 2018. The vans have allowed staff to take students to approximately forty one field trips in the community such as NC Works, local businesses like In-



gles, Southwire, Snap On, and Tri-County Community College. These field trips give students an idea of jobs out in the community and acquire various work experiences before graduating high school. The vans purchased with the help of The Cannon Foundation, Inc. grant has allowed Industrial Opportunities, Inc. to enhance the lives of clients and students in the tri-county area of WNC and will continue to do so for years to come.

There has been an average of 4,000 miles driven between the two vans since September 2017. The IOI Board of Directors and Management Team are very appreciative that the new vans offer a safe and comfortable transportation to our adults with disabilities.

Susan Camille O'Brien

04/06/1950 - 03/01/2018



When we say goodbye to loved ones
Whose time on earth is done,
We have faith their joys in heaven
will have only just begun.

Thank you
for your thoughtfulness
& memorial gifts.

Tom O'Brien

Chris & Mary Jane Galvin
Mike & Robin Stevenson
Town of Murphy Power Board
Phil & Virginia Mattox
Benefit Solutions
Regina Rogers
Kenneth & Margaret Isidor
Rebecca Penland
Sharon Barnes
Frank & Opal Rose
David Hilton
Webster Enterprises
Dr. Karen Borchers
Maurice & Susie West
Alan & Tara Brown
Dr. Peter & Patty Cook
Willie Nell Garrett
George & Marleen Marshall
Theresa Martin
Spears & Joyce Alexander
David Liden
Maurice & Elizabeth West
Susanne Lamb
Charles & Sue West

Quest Fellowship

- Mike & Robin Stevenson
- Harry Baughn
- Robby & Michelle Russell
- Harrah's Cherokee Casino
- Chris West
- Tom O'Brien
- Beth Walton
- Gene Robinson
- Roger & Regina Holloway
- Town of Murphy Power Board
- Karen Ann Simmons
- The Community Foundation of Greater New Haven
- Anne Rose
- Jere & Judy Annis
- George Heilner
- Tony & Suzy Deaton
- A+ Products
- Jerry & Julie Chautin
- Grace Fellowship Baptist Church
- Kathleen Roberts
- Dean Baughn
- John & Carol Campbell
- Harriet Mulford
- Natalie Moses
- Phil & Virginia Mattox
- Oak Forest UMW
- David & Norma Wooden
- St. William Ladies Guild
- St. William Catholic Church
- St. William Catholic Church Men's Club
- First Citizen's Bank

Supporters

- In memory of Maxine Earley by Sue Baldwin
- In honor of Doug Earley by Sue Baldwin
- In memory of Chris O'Brien by Chris & Mary Jane Galvin
- In memory of Chris, William & Shirley O'Brien, Kathy Pruzinsky, & Judy Sheridan by Tom O'Brien
- In memory of Chris O'Brien by Spears & Joyce Alexander
- In memory of Chris O'Brien by Brian Mitchell & Nancy Troxler
- In memory of D. Joseph O'Connor by Jill O'Connor Kelly
- In memory of Chris O'Brien by Mike & Robin Stevenson
- In memory of Cecile Mattox Campbell by Jane E. Campbell
- In honor of Tom O'Brien by Charles & Eileen Garven

Disability Employment Awareness Awards

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a landmark piece of legislation. This act was directed at establishing and preserving the rights along with advocating for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in every aspect of society, not just employment. This year marks the 28th anniversary for The Americans with Disabilities Act. The theme of this year's celebration is "America's Workforce: Empowering All." There has been significant progress made over the years in helping create a level playing field for this segment of our society. Statistics indicate that the unemployment rate of disabled persons is still more than twice that of non-disabled and the labor participation rate is less than half that of non-disabled. Even though these numbers have gradually improved year to year, there is, obviously, still a lot of work to be done. This year also marks the 28th year of the Disability Employment Awareness Awards being presented as a part of the Annual

Membership Dinner of the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce. The dinner was held on September 18, 2018 at McGuire Millrace Farm in Murphy, NC. The Disability Employment Awareness Awards recognize people who refuse to be defined by a disability. Also recognized are businesses who acknowledge that having a disability does not diminish the value and contribution that these people can provide to their organization. The first award was present to an individual who has been characterized as one who should be an inspiration to anyone who values persistence and understands the importance of contributing to the community in a work setting. The Personal Achievement Award was presented to Ryan Dockery. Over the course of his high school and college years, he received services from Vocational Rehabilitation. During this time, he worked part-time jobs, at times working multiple jobs. While working these part-time jobs, he

was described by his employers as someone who was prized for his work ethic and reliability. After college, he was unable to find work in the field in which he was trained. Vocational Rehabilitation assisted in additional job search activities. He has now moved into a position at Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Casino. This job has allowed him to work exclusively at the casino. He continues to be valued for the excellence for his work performance. When an employer award is presented, it is usually the result of either a corporate commitment to give employment opportunities to a person with a disability, or the recognition of the value of a potential employee by an individual within the company. Other times, it's a combination of these two dynamics, which is the case with the Employer Award this year. The Employer Award was presented to Lowe's of Murphy, NC. Bill Ledford, HR Manager, accepted the award on behalf of Lowe's. The fact that this em-

ployer received this award in 2005, just a year after they opened their doors locally, reinforces their ongoing commitment to offer employment opportunities to persons with disabilities. The efforts of the members of the management team of the Murphy Lowe's Home Improvement have been especially effective in making a success of an employment endeavor. Bill took the time to mentor a particular individual who might have not been able to develop the skills necessary to keep his job without such support. It would have been easy to give up on someone who had more challenges than the average person, but he was willing to help this person develop the skills that now make him an appreciated team member at Lowe's. The support of this management team member cannot be underestimated in our community. Promoting employment for all individuals enhances the opportunities as well as our community as a whole.

Yes, I would like to contribute to the capital needs of I.O.I.

All Gifts are Tax Deductible

Enclosed is a gift of \$ _____ toward capital improvements at I.O.I.

I make this gift:

- In memory or honor of _____
- To benefit the client activity fund.
- To benefit the IOI Endowment Fund.
- Enclosed is my Quest Fellowship donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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