

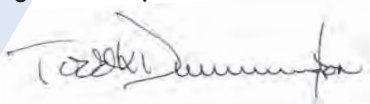
## CEO's CORNER

by Todd Dunnington

I invite you to read all the stories in this edition of our newsletter. In particular, we are recognizing two employers, Astronics and the Monroe Library, for their efforts in creating a more diverse workplace. At Skills Inc., we strongly believe that our disability hiring practices have a positive impact on our social mission and enterprise goals. Employers can benefit when they knowingly hire persons with disabilities. First and foremost, they benefit by meeting specific business and personnel needs, and, by tapping into a broader pool of candidates, they increase the likelihood of finding the very best person for the job. As we see in the article about Astronics' experience, it can also broaden the perspective of **every** employee.

Astronics is noteworthy because their employees initiated a desire to learn American Sign Language. Management provided the resources, accommodations, and training necessary to support all of their employees. Monroe Library should be commended for utilizing a volunteer in a community-based assessment capacity. As they discovered, using volunteers and interns is a tried-and-true approach to recruiting, and it resulted in a great hire.

There are many ways to develop and implement diversity strategies. Hiring persons with disabilities is a good business decision and can contribute to your organization's goals and objectives.



## ALL IN A DAY'S WORK: *Getting Hired*



Former Skills Inc. client and current Astronics employee, Ashley Mendes

When employers take that extra step to ensure the success of their employees, it's worth taking a moment to stop and recognize them. **Astronics** is one such employer. **Ashley Mendes** was a former Division of Vocational Rehabilitation client who was introduced to Astronics at the October 2010 Bothell "Say Hey" event, which connects job seekers with potential employers. A few months later, Ashley was an Administrative Assistant 2 at Astronics.

Ashley graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Hospitality Management from Ohio State University in 2009. After returning to Washington, she began her job search but encountered the same struggles faced by other job seekers. Ashley was referred to Skills Inc. Vocational Services and was a model client. She was able to accurately identify her strengths and stay motivated, open-minded, and flexible, which allowed her to look at various industries. These strategies and attitudes greatly increased her chances of finding employment.

Ashley is the first deaf employee to be employed at Astronics, an aerospace lighting and electrical power company in Redmond, WA. Astronics asked Ashley what she required in order to perform her job duties successfully. In response to her needs, they provided a videophone as well as American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. On her first day of employment, Astronics arranged for the **UW ADA Center** to educate her team about communication and etiquette regarding people who are deaf or hard of hearing and about disability in general. They also arranged for a six week ASL class to help Ashley's team learn sign language. Once word got

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*"The people are nice, friendly, and make me feel comfortable. I want to come to work."*

- Ashley Mendes

### SAVE THE DATE:

National Disability Mentoring Day is **October 19th**, please read the back page for details

[www.skillsinc.com](http://www.skillsinc.com)

# Communication is Key

Fostering strong communication in the workplace is essential to maintaining productivity and customer satisfaction. As Skills Inc. continues to grow, so does our commitment to an inclusive workplace. We make an effort to identify and remove barriers to communication. There are physical, environmental, and attitudinal factors which can limit participation. However, by providing appropriate training and accommodation, anything is possible, which is the case with **Michael Howser**.

He came to Skills Inc. as a Department of Vocational Rehabilitation client. During his three-month Community Based Assessment (CBA) Michael trained with a deaf co-worker as a CNC Machine Operator. He also spent time in the saw shop, where his coworkers described him as, a great worker with a great work ethic: bright, dependable, and easy to get along with. However, as Michael's CBA came to a close, there were no full-time positions available in this area. Vocational Programs Supervisor, **Missy Parkinson** was committed to Michael's employment goals, and she was able to identify another opportunity. He interviewed for and was offered a newly-created position in the paint shop.

Helping make this transition successful was **Erin Baretich**, Skills Inc.'s full-time ASL interpreter. She worked closely with Michael during his first few weeks, which is often the

case with newly-hired Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) employees. Michael and his co-workers quickly developed their own system of communicating and now rarely need day-to-day interpreting. However, Erin is available to clarify technical information, support training and group meetings. She explains, "Having an interpreter on staff makes it possible to remove communication and cultural barriers for DHH employees. The enhanced ability to have in-depth conversations with supervisors and coworkers opens doorways to professional development and upward mobility. It gives them an opportunity to have a voice, share their ideas and contribute, which is beneficial to them as individuals and to the company as a whole."

Using an interpreter is one example of the many ways we strive to have an inclusive workplace. However, in today's world, employers can also take advantage of the latest technology and multiple resources within our community.

Contact the **Northwest ADA Center** if you are interested in obtaining more information regarding your accommodation initiatives at [www.dbtacnorthwest.org](http://www.dbtacnorthwest.org).

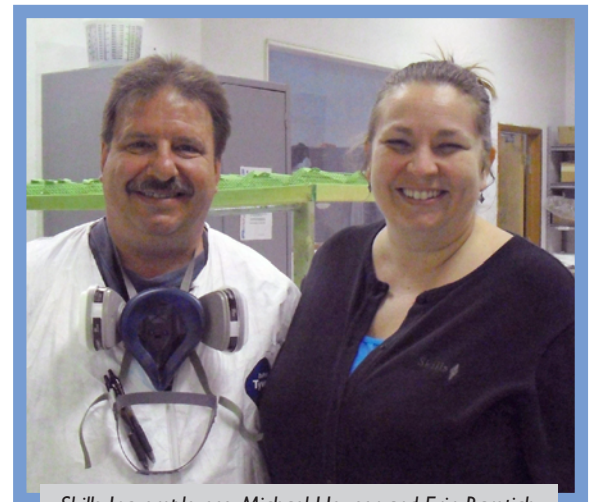
- Steven Fawcett, Training Administrative Assistant

## << GETTING HIRED | *cont. from pg 1*

around, other employees who were not on Ashley's team also wanted to get involved, so Astronics provided additional ASL classes and made them available to all employees.

Ashley's story is a perfect example of the employer, the community and the client working together to help people with disabilities find jobs.

- Natalie Gromoff, Employment Specialist



Skills Inc. employees, Michael Howser and Erin Baretich

## Beyond the Classroom

Skills Inc.'s **Aerospace Internship Program (AIP)** continues to be a big success. We served thirty students in the 2010-2011 academic calendar year. Additionally, we formed a partnership with Kent School District, bringing our district count to three.

This summer, we were able to hire five AIP students in our Auburn facility. They worked in shot peen, takedown, packaging, maintenance, milling and the sheet metal shop. When their summer jobs end, they will each move on to new opportunities. Two will return to school, one has enlisted in the military, and the remaining two hope to continue working full-time. When asked about their experience, one student said, "Skills is the best thing that has happened to me. I love working here." Another student said that the AIP helped to prepare him for work and he knew what to expect.

The Fall semester begins September 7th. Please join us at the annual golf tournament to support the AIP. Your contributions help make a positive impact in these students' lives.

- Missy Parkinson, Vocational Programs Supervisor



2010 - 2011 AIP Students with their Certificates of Achievement

# Small Town Success

## CARF News

Skills Inc. was awarded a three-year re-accreditation from the **Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)** on July 5th, 2011. The following programs and services were accredited: Employment Services, Job Development, Job Supports, Job-Site Training, and Employment Planning Services. Organizations must complete a rigorous peer review process and demonstrate to a survey team that its programs and services are of the highest quality, that their goals are measurable, and that the organization has been accountable to all its stakeholders. CARF Accreditation enables Skills Inc. to contract with the **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**, providing employment services to under-employed and under-served persons with disabilities. Helping people become gainfully employed and self-sufficient is at the heart of Skills Inc.'s mission.

- Cheryl Roe, Director of Programs & Development

### SKILLS INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## Youth in Our Community

This summer, Skills Inc. partnered with the **Seattle Youth Employment Program** and **Rainier Scholars** to provide internship opportunities for under-served youth.

To find out more, visit their websites:

**Rainier Scholars** -  
www.rainerscholars.org

**Seattle Youth Employment Program** -  
www.seattle.gov/humanservices/youth/employment.htm

**Nicole Williams** has been a Monroe Library volunteer since January, performing miscellaneous — but necessary — tasks, such as organizing periodicals, straightening up tables and work areas, and refilling boxes of scratch paper. It's easy to take those sorts of the tasks for granted, but Nicole realizes how crucial she is to the smooth operation of the library, which is such a focal point for the small community of Monroe.

Nicole has become an incredible asset to the library. She has been encouraged and supported by one of our Employment Specialists, **Natalie Gromoff**. Natalie originally helped Nicole coordinate her volunteer work at the library as a CBA in order to determine if Nicole was ready for paid employment. Together, they identified Nicole's strengths and interests. While job searching, Nicole continued volunteering at the library with the hopes that a part-time position might eventually open up.

Nicole's patience paid off. She interviewed for a part-time Library Page position at the Everett Library and another one at her own library in Monroe. Because some incredibly stiff competition was anticipated for both positions, Natalie and Nicole had practiced interviewing skills and worked on some of the challenges that Nicole's disability brings.

**Carolyn Bly**, Nicole's supervisor, had given her an excellent letter of recommendation



Monroe Library employee, Nicole Williams

and put in a good word for her at both libraries. Carolyn wrote: "The staff and I have very much enjoyed Nicole's presence here. Nicole is very willing to complete any task that she is asked to do. Others have commented about how nice she is and how much we rely on her here."

Nicole and Natalie's hard work has ended with success. Nicole was recently offered the Page position at the **Monroe Library**. Everyone is thrilled that Nicole has come so far and is headed down a career path that she really enjoys.

- Genny Seidensticker, Employment Specialist



Rainier Scholars intern, Gabriel Tran

## Skills Inc. CEO Joins WDC

We are excited to announce that our CEO, Todd Dunnington, has been appointed to the **Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council (WDC) Board of Directors**. The WDC is a nonprofit grant-making organization whose purpose is to bring employers, jobseekers, youth, educators, labor groups, and other nonprofits together to find and fund solutions to workforce gaps. As a social enterprise, Skills Inc. is interested in the economic and workforce development issues that impact our industry and the numerous stakeholders we serve in our community. To learn about the WDC, visit their website at [www.seakingwdc.org](http://www.seakingwdc.org).

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR

# Annual Golf Tournament

What: Four Person Best Ball Scramble

When: **Friday, September 16th**

Where: Druids Glen Golf Club  
29925 207th Ave SE  
Covington, WA 98042

Info: Monica Lucero  
(206) 782-6000  
Monical@skillsinc.com



**Spaces are filling up fast, so sign up today!**

All proceeds will directly benefit the **Skills Inc. Aerospace Internship Program (AIP)**. The AIP is an educational and vocational training program for high school students with disabilities and barriers to learning. Providing an alternative to a traditional classroom environment helps at-risk students earn credits and complete their education. Students receive one-on-one training, mentoring, and personalized instruction — all of which create a practical learning environment where students are engaged and motivated to succeed.

For registration and sponsorship opportunities, please visit our website, [www.skillsinc.com](http://www.skillsinc.com).

## NDEAM

“Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities” is the 2011 theme for **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)** which will be held this October.

Skills Inc. is urging everyone to consider ways to increase awareness about disability employment issues, as well as celebrate and recognize the contributions of American workers with disabilities. There are many ways to participate in and promote NDEAM. Consider facilitating job shadowing and mentoring a young adult or student with a disability from your community. If you want help, we are willing to provide employers with assistance identifying potential mentees. Please direct questions to **Cheryl Roe** at [Cheryl@skillsinc.com](mailto:Cheryl@skillsinc.com).

**Save the Date for Disability Mentoring Day: Wednesday, October 19, 2011**

We can all play a role in making a difference by promoting the employment of persons with disabilities. Kathy Martinez, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), states on her blog, “Each of us can become a link for inclusion of individuals with disabilities on an individual, community or employer level.” For more information, visit ODEP’s website at [www.dol.gov/odepl/](http://www.dol.gov/odepl/).

## Bowling with Bounds

Our 2011 Bowling with Bounds Tournament was our best yet, with record donations and bowlers. All proceeds benefitted our **Outreach Program** and **Vocational Services**. A big thanks to our sponsors, donors, volunteers and participants! We are very fortunate that every year so many businesses, individuals and the local media support this event.



*KING 5's, Dennis Bounds and Outreach employee, Trevor Adams*

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- Kenmore Lanes
- KING 5
- KJR 950 Sports Radio
- Microsoft
- Roach, Patrick & Kathleen

- Advanced Technical Services NW
- Archie McPhee
- Aronson-Campbell Industrial Supply
- Baker, Mike
- Baker, Rick
- Barrett, Lorraine
- Blakey, Mike
- Bounds, Dennis
- Buchanan, Kyle
- Budd, Curt
- Build-a-Bear
- Claim Jumper
- Copeland, Robert & Lisa
- Corey, Andrea
- Czeslawa Wellman, Joan
- Davenport Cellars
- Dream Dinners
- Dunnington, Todd & Julie
- Frampton, Charlie & Pattie
- Fred Meyer
- Furness, Ian
- Gallagher, Rod & Barbara
- Gray, Brandi & Bill
- Green Mountain Coffee
- Harter, Sally
- Heeter, Bill & Doreen
- Jones, Jesse
- Johnson, Christie
- Jonsson, Susan
- Jurgensen, Carolina
- Lakeview Yoga
- Larsen, Dan
- Marriott Redmond Town Center
- Marriott, Rich
- Miller, Michael
- Morris, Kevin
- Northwest Embroidery
- Novelty Hill - Januik
- Ohayon, Tamir
- Oyster Creek Inn
- Pacific Science Center
- Padolina, Mylene
- Paint Away!
- Paysse, Rachel & Brian Jenisson
- Pearl
- Portillo, Jose
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- Puckett, Jason
- QFC
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- Roberts, Barbara & Greg
- Roe, Cheryl & Paul
- Salon Zeka
- Schauffler, Allen
- Schmidt, Vladimir
- Seattle Seahawks
- Seattle Sounders FC
- Seidensticker, Genny
- Sempre Italiano
- Snyder, Larry
- Stremick, Dennis & Kathleen
- Taylor, Tracy
- Two Moons Gallery & Gifts
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