

Welcome to the First Edition of Promising Practices

For several years, CARF surveyors have provided observations on promising practices, or exemplary conformance to standards, in their survey reports. Through the CARF data collection system we can identify those organizations that have received exemplary conformance ratings for one or several standards.

In response to the frequent request, “Do you know who does...?,” we are offering a series of short articles on a variety of promising practices that CARF surveyors have observed during surveys from 2004 to the present.

The practice presented in each article is usually from an organization that has one or two practices rated exemplary out of the hundreds rated for conformance during a survey. We have no particular order we will follow in presenting this series of short reports. The purpose is not to rate one organization over another, but to encourage U.S. and Canadian community providers to dialogue with one another and to encourage creative solutions to individual service designs and organizational business practices and



To sign up for the Promising Practices Series for a bi-monthly email of new and exiting practices in the field, please email Reneé Bibby at rbibby@carf.org with “subscribe” in the title.

thereby achieve effective and positive results in each organization’s community.

Although there are indeed a number of ways to approach conformance to a standard, what makes organizations given an exemplary rating stand out is their professional and strategic response to an observed service or business need, always designed with input from their stakeholders and based on those individuals’ quality expectations.

Microenterprise in a Rural Community

It all started when a young woman at Thumb Industries expressed how much she liked making her own cards and stationery. Already busy with successful mobile crews, a retail store, and a manufacturing branch, Thumb Industries had discontinued its handmade Christmas cards. But with card-making supplies still in stock, pairing the artistic interest of a consumer with existing resources seemed a natural direction to take. This kicked off Thumb Industries’ first microenterprise.

Encouraged by the success of this first project, Thumb Industries has continued to encourage entrepreneurial spirits to start their own businesses. So often the idea behind the business is connecting those in need of a product with those who can provide it. At one time, Thumb Industries was shredding old, donated clothing into rags and selling these to local factories, but now a consumer owns his own business and performs that work as a contractor. A second consumer is cutting up old wooden pallets from the organization’s manufacturing operations into bundles of campfire wood. Another consumer is taking metal items, such as appliances and hangers, and tearing them apart for scrap in his salvage business.

Sometimes it’s connecting resources in a less obvious way, such as the very successful microbusiness in which a consumer runs a snack bar business at Thumb Industries’ facility and also has vending machines at three other locations. Other times it’s about finding a way to take artistic talent and make it profitable, such as the individual making wood crafts that he sells at two Thumb Industries’ stores and craft shows.

Thumb Industries now has a business process and infrastructure to support consumers’ choices in establishing their own businesses. All the microbusinesses receive ongoing staff support as needed to help individuals complete the job, purchase needed equipment, or anything else that might come up in the occasionally unpredictable world of business. Thumb Industries has fronted the start-up costs and developed business plans with each individual to pay back the “loan” within a certain time. The main funding source for the micro-businesses is through a contract with the local community mental health department.

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