Every day is a happy day at Abrams,” says Marguerite. If you spend any time at all talking to anyone else who works at Abrams Airborne, you believe it. Marguerite Delsol is Job Coach for Beacon’s Community Work Crew at Abrams Airborne in Tucson. They are one of twenty-one Beacon work crews employed at many different local businesses. Whether it’s Marguerite talking about the people at Abrams, or the Abrams employees talking about Marguerite and her crew — there’s a lot of mutual admiration going on.

Abrams Airborne received Beacon’s Visionary Award in December for their “enduring commitment to workers with disabilities.” It’s one of many awards the company has received over its forty-plus years. Abrams manufactures specialized products for the aerospace and electronics industries. Those products can be found almost anywhere in the world — as well as out of this world! You’ll find their products in hospitals, on ships and planes, as well as in outer space on satellites and on the space shuttle.
It’s Good to Dream!

As I was reading a draft of the article for this newsletter on Beacon’s Board Chairman, Skip Whitley, I couldn’t help but think back to when he and the board hired me in 1980. It seems like so long ago, and yet, seems like only yesterday. A lot has certainly changed since then. Now, it seems, everyone has a computer, a cell phone and a PDA. We’ve all got cable or satellite TV — probably “high-def” — and a navigation system in our car. It’s called “progress.” But, is it? Putting more people to work; greater variety and better paying jobs; a large caring professional staff; new spacious facilities; it’s all about helping more people overcome the challenges and barriers they face to living and working in our complex society. That’s how we measure progress.

These gains don’t just happen by chance or by luck. Certainly there has been very hard work. But, there has also been intelligent planning for the future we wanted for ourselves and our clients. It is again time for us to stop and take a look at where we are, what we have accomplished and where we want to be in the next five years. We are soon coming to a critical juncture in Beacon’s development with the near completion of our new building and the combining of most our operations under one roof. So where do we go from here? Where do we want to be five, ten years from now? What services do we want and need to offer our clients and families? Identifying those is one thing, but how do we actually get there and cover the costs associated with those services?

Shortly, the Board of Directors and Senior Management staff will be sitting down with a consultant and developing a new strategic plan for Beacon. We need your help! Please let us know your thoughts, ideas and concerns about Beacon as we go forward. Are there new services that you would like to see offered by Beacon for its clients? Or, are some of our current services not necessary today? Do you think we need to modify some of our existing services to better serve our clients? Your input would be valuable as we select the course that Beacon will follow over the next several years! Please contact a Board Member or myself with your ideas and/or concerns. We do want to hear from you!

Beacon Group was recently presented the “Agency of the Year” award by Judith Spiel from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Eastside Office. The award was given in recognition of our work in assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain employment. In addition, RSA recognized our ability to “continue to provide essential support services to clients who desire employment.” RSA acknowledged that “Beacon Group defines rehabilitation; touching people’s lives and making them better every day.” We are proud and honored to be given this award. It will serve to strengthen our continued commitment to provide quality services to people with disabilities.

So where do we go from here? Where do we want to be five, ten years from now?

Steve King, President/CEO

Arizona Department of Economic Security
Rehabilitation Services Administration
Presented to
The Beacon Group

The RSA Eastside Office has the honor of presenting to the Beacon Group this award in recognition of their work done assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain employment. For over fifty years, Beacon has helped thousands of people in need of employment opportunities. With the many changes that RSA faces, the Beacon Group continues to provide essential support services to clients who desire employment and require assistance in finding and maintaining employment. The Beacon Group defines rehabilitation; touching people’s lives and making them better every day.

Steve King, President/CEO

January 15, 2008
Marguerite has been the crew supervisor at Abrams since it started two years ago. Born on the island nation of St. Lucia, she grew up in England before moving to Tucson in the early nineties. In 1993 Marguerite first came to work at Beacon supervising the work crew at Jim Click Automotive. She left Beacon to work at a local group home, but was talked into coming back to oversee our crew at Abrams in January 2006.

Abrams manager, Ron Herbert, says “Marguerite does an exceptional job supervising her crew. Working side by side with them she focuses on their well-being and training, all the while managing high quality productivity and adding to their long list of capabilities.” He’s not alone praising Marguerite and her crew. Last Fall, Beacon received a nice note from all the Abrams employees thanking the Beacon team for helping Abrams “become more efficient and cost effective.”

It’s not easy meeting the training needs of clients and the production demands of business. Luckily, Marguerite Delsol has the heart for helping and the head for business that makes it work so well.

Thank you Robert S (Disco Duck), Ronnie D (Bronco Billy), Jerilyn W (Olive Oil), Edward S, (Billy Bob) and Supervisor Marguerite Delsol for playing a big part in helping the Abrams Airborne Manufacturing assembly area reduce their overtime and become a more efficient operation.

This Beacon team prepares components to be put in commercial computer chassis, performs deburring activities and light assembly, prepares and assembles printed circuit board card guides, separates and counts many various components, disables and salvages re-useable parts from scrap components as well as other activities as necessary. They work hard and produce good quality so that our employees, who would otherwise have to stay and work overtime, can meet production deadlines. Overall their efforts have helped the Company become more efficient.

You probably noticed the additional names in parenthesis. These are affectionate nicknames for Robert, Ronnie, Jerilyn and Edward, which goes to show how well they have integrated into the Abrams workforce.

THANK YOU Disco Duck, Bronco Billy, Olive Oil and Billy Bob for helping Abrams Airborne Manufacturing become more efficient and cost-effective in their production operations.

Signed,
All Abrams Employees

Last Fall, Beacon client and ex-Army veteran Jason Miller was featured in the cover story of this newsletter. Jason has since left Beacon, but he hasn’t gone far. In November, Abrams Airborne asked Beacon to find a client to assist with their inventory control. In December, Jason joined the Beacon work crew at Abrams working as a cycle counter in the hardware room. Just after he started, the hardware room supervisor left Abrams. Even though Jason had only been there a short while, he had impressed management so much, they hired him full time and promoted him to Supervisor! One of Jason’s first jobs was to train his replacement — a new client from Beacon. Atta boy, Jason!
“If you build it, they will come.”

I guess you can say we heard the voices. They say there are 35,000 of them. They need a place to go. No, not a ballpark or cornfield, they need a place to work. There are an estimated 35,000 unemployed people with disabilities in Tucson. Even though we are the largest employer in southern Arizona of people with disabilities, we heard the silent voices of thousands more who still needed a place, still needed a job and still needed a chance.

Last year Beacon kicked-off an ambitious building project to add 34,000 square feet of new production, warehouse, office, meeting and activity space to our existing facility at Oracle and Glenn. With this new space we will be able to serve more people — a lot more — and do it better! We knew if we just had the room, people would come. They would come so they didn’t have to sit at home anymore. They would come for the chance to learn how to do something well enough to get paid for it. They would come to have a full life and real dignity.

We are all very excited to see the building progress and to realize we are getting closer to having the facility we have dreamed about for a number of years. A place where someone with Down Syndrome, traumatic brain injury or no eyesight can learn to overcome their formidable challenges and learn skills, make friends and find acceptance. A place where those forgotten by society can earn their own way and feel useful. A place to show off with pride! It’s still a little hard to actually see through the steel frame, wires, and concrete. But it’s coming along nicely and soon will clearly be just what we’ve hoped for: a safe place; a work place; a show place.

As the work progresses, our Dignity of Work Building Campaign has raised $1,240,000 of the two million dollar goal. There are still many naming opportunities left at different giving levels. We also need more donors for our “100 Rays of Light” – people who will pledge $400 a year for five years.

As we get closer to our June completion date, we are starting to imagine how great it will be to see many hundreds of clients and staff under one roof, working in bright new surroundings where dreams can come true.

“Oh, people will come. Ray. People will definitely come.”

You can still help Beacon build something magical. For more information or to make a donation, please call Patrick McCarthy, Beacon Director of Development at (520) 622-4874 ext. 166.
Beacon Group recently acquired the old skating rink at 2700 N. Stone (just south of Glenn) with plans of rehabilitating the 25,000 sq. ft. property for our future needs. We are just days away from completion of this project and the results look great. The site is just three blocks east of our main headquarters at 308 W. Glenn and offers Beacon Group many current opportunities and flexibility for the future.

The completion of this project will allow us to transition the processing and office functions out of our original 300 N. Fourth Avenue Value Village Store location and trigger the start of our next project.

We will begin to remodel the original thrift store on 4th Ave. and convert the old office space to retail storefronts. These changes will allow us to lease 8,400 sq. ft. of retail space in the high demand 4th Ave Merchants block to new shop owners. When the new underpass and trolley line between Rio Nuevo, Downtown Tucson, and the University of Arizona Complex is complete, our shop space project will be at the corner of the main trolley stop and in the middle of all the action!

Our new space on North Stone Avenue will be used for...

- A new processing area for our Value Village Thrift Store operations
- A second Value Village Store
- A laundry/training program in conjunction with Value Village
- New offices for donation phone lines and truck dispatch
- An internet sales program for special Value Village items
- A secure storage vault for all of Beacon Group’s records
- Additional parking for our fleet of company transportation vehicles

In addition, we will be leasing out 7,000 square feet of retail store space.

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE PRESENTED AT ANNUAL PARTY

At the annual holiday party in December, Beacon recognized special staff members, clients, professionals and businesses for the exceptional achievements and support of our mission. Congratulations to all our winners!

Robert Johnson
OUTSTANDING BEACON CLIENT

Jimmie Muro
OUTSTANDING BEACON CLIENT

German Hernandez
PHANTOM AWARD
For the employee who does the most but is seen the least!

Michael Gomez
EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Vicki Desy
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor LEADERSHIP AWARD

Senator Paula Aboud
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

VISIONARY AWARD FOR BUSINESSES—Safeway (left photo, with Beacon Board Members), and Abrams Airborne (right)
“Never give up!” says Skip Whitley, Chairman of the Board, as he surveys the 34,000 square foot addition under construction at the Glenn Street site. Construction on the addition began just over eight months ago, but the foundation on which Beacon is built was laid over fifty years earlier. Skip was around for thirty of those years, and easily recalls memories of times past, and the many uphill battles fought as the organization changed from a mom-and-pop operation on the brink of financial disaster to a fiscally sound organization that now serves over 1,600 clients a year. “Just don’t ever give up.”

“I see our development as a parallel to our clients. We faced extreme challenges through the early years. Challenges that really threatened our survival.”

Skip remembers driving to Phoenix on a Friday to pick up state checks so we could cover payroll on Monday. “But we persevered — just like the clients we serve,” Skip notes with true pride. With nearly total dependence on government funding and yearly revenue of less that $200,000 and a small client base of approximately 60 developmentally disabled adults, Beacon relied on whatever work came its way to cover our overhead through the years. “We made stakes for a construction company and had a contract with a hat manufacturer. The hat company went out of business and we got stuck with a whole room full of hats!” said Skip.

With the arrival in Tucson of IBM in 1986, Beacon finally had an opportunity to diversify our sub-contract work. But increased prosperity was short lived when IBM left Tucson in the early ’90s and took the assembly work with them. Work was scarce, and once again Beacon looked for ways to attract work for our clients.

For years, Tetra Corp. and Beacon Foundation had been competing for the same clients and the same jobs from local companies. About five years ago, after Beacon’s Director resigned, the two organizations started talk of a merger. Beacon parents and board members were excited about the opportunity to work side-by-side with a well established organization with a sound fiscal history. Tetra was happy to have Beacon’s reputation and Value Village Thrift Store. So the two joined forces and became Beacon Group.

And now, with the projected July ’08 completion date on construction just around the corner, the merger will finally be complete when both Beacon and Tetra programs operate from one location. “This is a culmination of many years of work by many people. This is a place where people can be proud to come to work,” Skip says. “I’ve never had a more rewarding experience from being involved with any other organization.”

Tucson native Dwight “Skip” Whitley, is a local practicing attorney who graduated from the U of A Law School.

**GETTING INVOLVED**

**Beacon Walks for Breast Cancer Awareness to Support one of Our Own**

Last October, a group of staff and volunteers from Beacon joined together to **Walk for Breast Cancer Awareness** here in Tucson. The Team was organized by Peg Hammond who works for Beacon’s Desert Explorers Day Treatment Program.

The group of walkers included one Desert Explorer client who herself has been diagnosed with Breast Cancer. The group of 17 intrepid walkers that called themselves the “Beacon Believers” raised $1,400 to fight Breast Cancer.
Whatever the reason Maria Sparks did not have a single job since graduating from the special ed program at Amphi High School twenty-five years ago, it sure wasn’t because of her attitude or ability to get along with others. You will never meet a sweeter, nicer person. And she wanted to work, too! She does have a mild developmental disability, but she clearly was ready, willing and able to work — something any employer would prize!

Maria is also achingly shy. Maybe that kept her from pushing harder for a chance to show what she could do and how valuable an asset she could be. Lucky for Maria, Pat knew how to get Maria the chance she needed. Pat Hansen is a counselor at Vocational Rehabilitation’s northwest office. She referred Maria to Beacon Group for work adjustment and training in December 2005. Our job was to find out what Maria could do, what she couldn’t do, and what she wanted to do.

Maria started working in Beacon’s rivet assembly area. Her supervisor documented Maria’s accuracy, high-quality work and pleasant, outgoing nature. In just six months, Maria progressed to our special “dry room” assembling drug testing kits. This work required higher skills and precision. Again, after just a few months, Maria had demonstrated her capabilities and value as an employee. The staff here at Beacon and at Vocational Rehabilitation believed it was time for Maria to “test her wings.”

Maria was progressively transferred to Beacon’s Job Development Department. They would help Maria search for outside employment and provide job counseling before and after she started working. Maria’s first taste of the competitive world of work came during tax time last year when she found seasonal work with a tax service. The letter of recommendation she received following her work there said, “her efforts in bringing in new customers were highly successful and many clients have positive comments concerning Maria.”

Maria Sparks was clearly ready to fly. All she needed now was the right co-pilot. She got that in Sue Elias, Beacon’s Employment Services Specialist. Sue took the assignment to help Maria find work like she would her own kid sister. It wasn’t a job for Sue, it was a mission.

Sue helped Maria find another seasonal position at Sears as a merchandise support person last November. After her first month in this temp position, Sears asked Maria if she wanted to become a permanent employee. On January 1st of this year, Maria Sparks began “flying solo” for the first time in her life prepping merchandise for sale. This wasn’t a “training” or “seasonal” position. She had the permanent job she had wanted for years. She had the experience and confidence in herself that she needed to persevere. She had the benefit of professional guidance from Pat Hansen and Sue Elias. And she also had a very supportive staff at Sears.

Dave Heibeisen, Operations Coach at Sears, says of Maria, “we’re very pleased with her work, her attitude and her work ethic. Her attendance is great. We are proud to have her as a member of the Sears team.”

Maria has a lot more to learn and a long way still to go, but for now — at last — it’s quite a ride.
Beacon Group has received a gift of $61,000 from the estate of Blair and Thelma Saylor. Their son, Robert, worked at Beacon in the early ’90s after a serious car accident left him with a traumatic brain injury. Robert’s parents had established a Living Trust agreement for Robert that had also named Beacon as a Remainder Beneficiary. Unfortunately, Robert passed away before his parents did.

Robert’s father, Blair, passed away a few years ago. After Thelma Saylor passed away last summer, her other son, Randy, contacted Beacon about the gift arrangement.

Of course, our condolences go out to Randy and his family, along with our sincere appreciation for their thoughtfulness.

It’s always a good idea for all our families to plan for their own financial future and that of a special needs child. There are many options available to families to help accomplish these goals. Life Insurance, a simple Will or a Living Trust are all common ways to provide for the future care of children. Naming Beacon Group as a Remainder Beneficiary of any funds left after your child has passed away is a good way to create a family legacy and provide for other special needs children far into the future. By naming Beacon Group and making the arrangement “irrevocable,” you may also create attractive tax benefits now.

We recommend you consult your attorney, accountant or financial advisor about your family’s needs. If you would like to discuss the possibility with Beacon or ask any questions please contact Patrick McCarthy, Director of Development at (520) 622-4874 ext. 166.