

The Daily Star, Oneonta, NY - otsego county news, delaware county news, oneonta news, oneonta sports

October 12, 2011

Arc Otsego, Corning plant team up to help recycle

By Denise Richardson
Staff Writer

ONEONTA _ Hamburgers, hot dogs and mac and cheese, heaped with thanks, were served by Corning Life Sciences employees to Arc Otsego trainees Tuesday.

About 120 trainees and 15 Corning workers met at the Arc Otsego Vocational Training Center on Browne Street to have lunch, organizers said, to celebrate job and recycling collaborations.

"You do outstanding work _ we really appreciate that," Darryl Lincoln, manager of the Corning plant on River Street, told trainees. "Thank you for all the hard work you've done for us."

Oneonta Mayor Dick Miller read a proclamation declaring October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month and emphasizing the benefits of a diverse community.

"Gainful employment is part of the fabric of our community," he read. "Our society as a whole benefits from a more-inclusive culture where every person is valued for his or her contributions.

"We are very lucky in Oneonta to have Corning. And lucky to have you."

Lincoln presented a certificate to the center. In an article about the collaboration on the Arc Otsego website, Lincoln said Corning learned 18 months ago that scrap plastic from the firm's biomedical manufacturing operation could be sold instead of given away to a recycler. But the plastic needed to be sorted first, he said, and the firm didn't have enough space, equipment or staff to do the work efficiently.

"We turned to The Arc Otsego, where trained workers were already providing cardboard inserts for our product packaging," Lincoln said. During the past year, the trainees have sorted and prepped more than 100 trailer-loads of plastic for recycling. Corning pays for the service, providing a source of income for more than a dozen trainees who rotate weekly through a work-team, Lincoln said.

"They do a terrific job," he said. "The enthusiasm and pride of these workers is tangible."

Workers with disabilities remain an untapped resource, Lincoln said, but by hiring such workers,

employers can improve their businesses, give meaningful work to a willing and well-trained set of workers and enrich an entire community.

Elizabeth Rowland, a supervisor at Corning for more than 30 years, said she was thrilled to be part of the crew serving lunch. Arc Otsego trainees have been excellent workers, she said.

"Their work is always top-notch," Rowland said.

Arc Otsego trainee Chris Vance said his experiences working for Corning have been good, and he applauded the luncheon as a way to show thanks.

"I think it's a great idea," Vance said.

Trainee Tammy Bell agreed and said the luncheon was a treat.

"It's awesome," she said. "We never get lunch like this."

Adam Hannah, a Corning engineer who moved to Oneonta for his job after graduating this year from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, said he was glad to volunteer in the community and meet people. He helped cook and serve Tuesday.

"I'm having a great time," he said.