

# The Will to Succeed

by Don Dobransky

It's 5:00 a.m. While most of us are still dreaming, Ken Johnston is up and eager to start his day. It will be a day of hard work, interaction with a variety of people, and challenges just like any of our average days. What makes each of his days unique from ours isn't what he does, or why. It is the manner in which he proves on a daily basis that having "special needs" means that he contributes something special to the workplace.

Ken works at the National Aviary through Goodwill Industries' Community Partnership Program. The program trains special needs persons and finds jobs for them. A Goodwill Job Coach, or Employment Specialist, accompanies Ken and the other Goodwill employees to their work site and smoothes any wrinkles in the day through patience, care, and a sense of humor.

The program gives each individual an opportunity to develop skills, earn wages, and expand their inter-personal abilities. More importantly, they gain independence, make friends, and build self-esteem. "They've seen their family and friends get up every day and go to work," explains Suzanne Ratnavale, Partnership Supervisor at Goodwill Industries. "Now our clients get to do what everyone else is doing."

When you see Ken, Doug, Arthur, Diane, or Crystal working at the National Aviary, you will see individuals who are working diligently. They perform their job duties quietly and attentively, only pausing to smile and ask how you're doing. They don't ask out of routine or as a formality, but because they sincerely care.

Does Ken like working at the National Aviary? "Oh, I love it!" he responds before the question is even completed. "I really like this place! I like the birds . . . and there are great people here." The love of our birds is rated by the group as the number one reason they enjoy working here. Ken was a bird enthusiast even before working at the Aviary, once owning a cockatoo named "Woodstock." His other interests, as anyone who has been around him knows, include the Steelers and the Penguins.

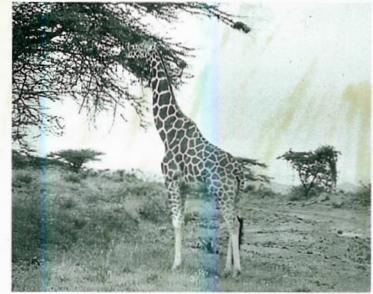
The Goodwill group working at the National Aviary has worked together in the past. They have faced difficult obstacles, and each has his or her own story of success. "They each have very different personalities, which compliment each other," according to Lisa Graff, the Job Coach for the group at the Aviary. "They're a tight group and have a good team spirit."

Their positive attitude and team spirit is obvious. "When I tell him 'Good job, Kenny,'" Graff explains, "His response is 'Hey Lisa, you're doing a good job, too. Keep it up.'" Graff does a good job of keeping everything smooth. Unexpected situations are one of the greatest challenges of her position.

The Community Partnership Program has significantly developed over the past five years, according to Ratnavale. The greatest difficulty she's encountered is finding enough partner organizations. "We have a lot of qualified, skilled clients but there are limited spaces right now." Presently, there are eleven partner organizations involved in the program.

If the past few years serve as a barometer of what's to come in the future, the program is likely to expand its partner base. What have been the program's greatest successes? "Seeing our clients accepted into the workplace," Ratnavale explains. "And seeing the look on their faces when they get their first paycheck."

If you are interested in learning more about the Community Partnership Program, please contact Suzanne Ratnavale of Goodwill Industries at (412) 390-2292.



Get up-close and personal with a giraffe!

## Postcards from the Edge

Make your friends jealous when you send them a postcard from South Africa! The National Aviary's African Safari will depart on November 5 and return November 15. Arrive at Johannesburg and work your way to Kruger National Park. Ride alongside herds of impala, wildebeest, zebra and other antelope species in your open vehicle. Cheetah, hyena and wild dogs call this wilderness environment home. You'll also have the opportunity to visit Dukier Island to view the Cape Fur Seals and ascend the cliff at Cape Point. This trip is a once-in-a-lifetime experience to view South Africa's magic, and is offered at a price of \$2,895.

Please contact Margie McKinley (412) 323-7235 extension 211 for more information on this trip.

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