

Lehman helps prepare food for academy students

Area lawmaker is special guest of food service worker with developmental disability

BY DENISE LOCKWOOD
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Danny Kosmala, who has a developmental disability, works about 25 hours a week making food for students at St. Joseph Catholic Academy thanks to the help of his employer, Taher Foods, and the support of Lakeside Curative Services.

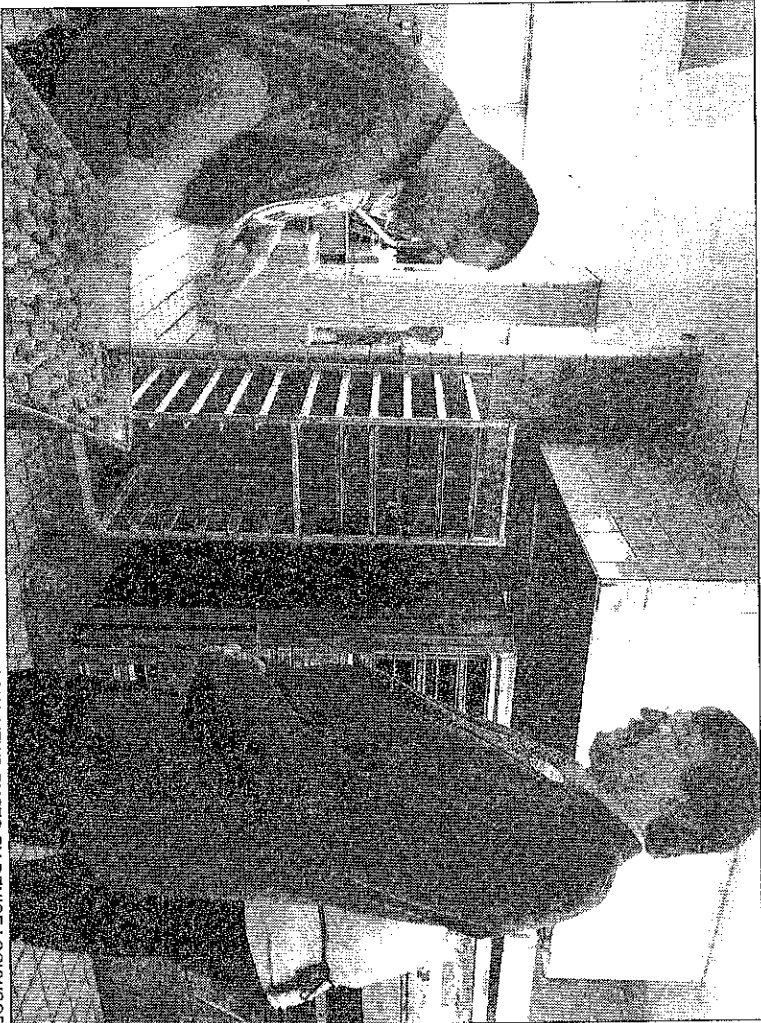
He likes the job and his co-workers, but he wanted his legislators to know that people who have developmental disabilities are out in the community working and that his job is an important aspect of his life.

On Monday he invited Sen. John Lehman, D-Racine, his district's representative in the state Senate, to be part of Take Your Legislator to Work Day.

Need competitive wages

The event is organized by the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities, which educates legislators about the need for competitive-wage jobs for people who have developmental disabilities.

Their reasoning: If people with developmental disabilities have competitive-wage jobs, then they are less likely



State Sen. John Lehman, right, talks with Danny Kosmala about his job in the kitchen at St. Joseph Catholic Academy in Kenosha Monday. Kosmala invited Lehman to spend a few hours with him on Take Your Legislator to Work Day.

KENOSHA NEWS PHOTO BY DENISE LOCKWOOD

to rely on publicly funded programs and services.

"I just wanted him to know that there are people like us ... people with developmental disabilities, out in the com-

munity, working," Kosmala said.

Kosmala lives in Racine at a group home with three other adults.

Nina Blaisdell, an em-

ployment specialist with Lakeside Curative Services, helped Kosmala adjust to his new work environment after he started the job a few months ago.

Lehman and Kosmala

Kosmala asked Blaisdell to help him write a letter asking Lehman to join him for Take Your Legislator to Work Day and Lehman accepted his request.

They spent Monday morning making popcorn chicken and fries at the school.

Lehman learned that Kosmala has worked in kitchens at the 21st Century Preparatory School in Racine and the Great Lakes Naval Station in Illinois.

Kosmala was brought to St. Joseph Catholic Academy by Lori Miller, the assistant chef at the school, because of his work ethic.

"Do you get along with your boss?" Lehman asked.

"Sure I do. She's one of my good buddies," Kosmala said with a smile.

But Lehman didn't really need reminding about the importance of work for people who have developmental disabilities.

That's because his daughter Martha has a developmental disability and she works.

Lehman thanked Kosmala for the invitation and encouraged him to keep up the good work.

LCS helps community work together toward a common vision

a common vision

MARY BETH POPCHOCK
Lakeside Curative Services

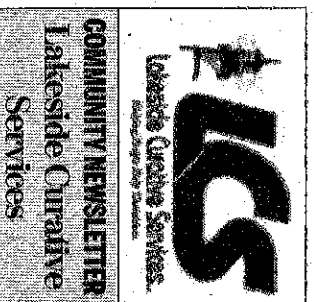
"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. [It is] the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon goals."

— Andrew Carnegie

Lakeside Curative Services was created out of a compelling vision and collective teamwork devoted to crafting an organization that would benefit the community.

As in past years, 2013 has provided Lakeside Curative Services with the opportunity to test Mr. Carnegie's assertion and the organization continues to prove the validity of his thoughts. Lakeside Curative Services has achieved much over the course of this year due to the leadership of a wonderful volunteer board of directors, dedicated and extremely talented staff members and through the generosity of other volunteers who so freely shared their time and expertise with the organization. Most importantly, the collective actions taken by this team have resulted in innovative and fantastic results for individuals with disabilities. Lakeside Curative Services can truly testify to the benefits of teamwork. Because of the teamwork that exists between the departments within Lakeside Curative Services, more Lakeside Curative Services participants than ever before are employed in the community.

Included in the team is the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation which often funds employment opportunities for Lakeside Curative Services participants. Across the spectrum of services that Lakeside Curative Services



offers, all participants are engaged in the community on at least a part-time basis. This couldn't happen without a team of staff who believe in importance of community involvement, and more importantly, in the potential of each and every Lakeside Curative Services participant. They refuse to settle for traditional service models and instead have worked together to create opportunities for participants to experience and be a part of the community so they can make informed choices about their future and their employment goals.

The most important individuals on the Lakeside Curative Services team are the participants. They represent Lakeside Curative Services' mission and are the sole driving force behind the work that Lakeside Curative Services accomplishes each and every day. According to one Lakeside Curative Services participant, "I felt like I wasn't really important except to my family. Lakeside Curative Services showed me that I can do almost anything if I put my mind to it."

Another participant shared that Lakeside Curative Services has helped him "be more responsible." Yet another participant expressed that he was so "thankful for getting the job of his dreams." These sentiments help show the positive difference

that Lakeside Curative Services makes in its participants' lives. Employment First is another example of teamwork. Lakeside Curative Services staff, along with a variety of other providers and individuals throughout the community, are moving this vision forward. The Employment First team is grateful for Racine Mayor John Dickert's and Racine County Executive Jim Ludwig's expressed support of individuals with disabilities working in the community. It is important for our community and business leaders to understand that they have access to a huge untapped labor pool that is full of individuals with a wide range of talents who can meet or exceed their unique business wants and needs. The Lakeside Curative Services tag line captures it all: "helping people help you."

Engaging in Lakeside Curative Services training options and community experiences prepares Lakeside Curative Services participants to be valued and contributing members of his/her community whether through volunteerism or employment. Thank you to the many businesses and volunteer sites that have opened their doors to Lakeside Curative Services participants during the past year and beyond.

As we enter the holidays, Lakeside Curative Services extends to each of you the very best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and hope for a new year that

brings an expanded community vision of inclusion for individuals with disabilities in Racine County. Please follow Lakeside Curative Services on Facebook and through our website at www.lcsracine.org.

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