

MASWM

Dignified and meaningful employment for people with disabilities...Quality services for Missouri.

Missouri Model Has National Significance

The Missouri Model for sheltered workshops is an important distinction for the operation of these nonprofit, small businesses.

Rob Libera, MASWM vice president and director of Lafayette Work Center and Lafayette Industries North, said many in Missouri don't realize how unique the state's workshops are. Many around the country could benefit by broader application of the philosophy.

"The Missouri Model for sheltered workshops is a model for the country," Rob explained. "It gives extended employment options to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It provides more choice, especially for any-

one who chooses to work in a workshop and who tried competitive employment and wasn't able to hold those positions."

Other factors are important, especially during a time when community employment is sometimes suggested as the only solution. "Missouri Model workshops provide stability in a safe environment," Rob said. "They offer workers a sense of purpose, socialization and provide an economic return for both the community and the state of Missouri."

This is not a new development. As



they have for half a century, Missouri workshops serve thousands of workers with disabilities. These Missourians average 15 years or longer at their jobs, bringing significant, positive impact to their lives and the families involved.

Eric Giebler, director of Empac Group Employment Resources in Sullivan, notes that the Missouri Model evolved to a significant degree for financial reasons. "Missouri workshops get no federal money," he said. "Most workshops around the country get federal

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How Workshops Help Businesses Flourish!

(This workshop business relationship is a great example of the many workshop services that help entrepreneurs while providing employment for people with disabilities.)

Project CU is fortunate to have many long-running customers. Among them is a company that is new to this St. Louis workshop. Named TinySuperheroes, the

new business provides super hero capes to young children who are overcoming illness or disability, offering them community, confidence and tools to recognize their differences as their superpowers.

Robyn Rosenberger started TinySuperheroes from her home. As business quickly increased, Robyn contacted Project to help keep up with the demand. Project stepped up to the challenge and began packing capes for the company's monthly fulfillment. Two new products were then introduced to this line, which now keeps many of Project's employees continually busy.

Soon, the demand even reached such a level that inventory needed to expand simply to keep up. Before the Project

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Employees at Project CU in St. Louis enjoy their work on a very unique job, TinySuperheroes. That company provides capes to young children who are overcoming illness or disability. The employees at the workshop have helped the fledgling company meet rapidly growing demand for the effort.

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How Workshops Help Businesses Flourish!

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staff knew it, they were the central in-bound hub from China as a direct supplier for the capes.

“We knew we needed to do something quickly, and Project stepped right up and offered to help!” Robyn said.

As with all jobs, Project quickly examined the work, adapted the process for their employees and began to train everyone in their new roles. Two key players in the success of this job were Angela Aliverina and Angela Graves who each took ownership in the operation. Along with their supervisor, Heather Foster, they

went above and beyond what was needed, focused on the line and worked towards the daily goals. Whether on this or other lines, whatever challenges Heather sends their way, they are always quick to respond and always take great pride in the final products.

With the continued growth and an ever-evolving relationship, Project and TinySuperheroes have become great partners. “We would definitely be in a tough

spot if Project wasn’t there!” Robyn noted.

A key element of this successful partnership is the continued support of communications with everyone, from Robyn all the way to the front line with Heather and her crew. Everyone plays a key role in keeping the capes “flying.”

Today, Project is proud to be a part of the TinySuperheroes’ success and continues to look for ways to grow together.

Missouri Model Has National Significance

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money and Medicaid. Our model is based on far fewer dollars coming in, and we focus significantly on production.”

That difference has other outcomes. Missouri workshops tend to focus a lot on their communities, including the jobs they can offer. “We’re heavily into community employment here,” Eric said of the Sullivan workshop. “We’re looking for whatever job is available and what employees are interested in.”

Choice and options play other roles. “We’ve got a smooth avenue to community employment,” Eric added. “But if they have trouble, they can come back to the shop. Then, if they want to try it again, they can. It’s balanced.”

The Missouri Model sees workshops operating essentially as small businesses. A few have 200 workers or more with disabilities, but many have far less than that. Like most, the Sullivan shop earns from 70-80 percent of its revenue from produc-

tion. “It’s based upon productivity and not on heavy subsidies,” Eric said.

Rob notes many critics seem to have never visited a workshop. “A lot of them need to see workshops firsthand to understand,” he said. “They haven’t seen a workshop; they haven’t talked to the parents. Listening to the experiences of parents who have struggled to place a child in competitive employment is eye-opening.”

Eric agreed. “This is about more options, not less,” he concluded. “It’s really an individualized, personal plan to success.”

Both agreed that one of the most disheartening criticisms seems to stem from those who see all people with disabilities as identical, assuming they can all do a certain level of work and thrive in certain conditions. “To lump everyone with disabilities into one category and say there’s one solution is really insulting to those individuals,” Rob said. “It doesn’t make sense.”

January Meeting Set for Jeff City

The January 2020 MASWM Conference will be held at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City, Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 27 and 28. The agenda is:

Monday, Jan. 27:

8 a.m. – 12 p.m. – MASWM/MESA

Board Members

12 p.m. – 1 p.m. – Buffet lunch open to all attendees

1 p.m. – 2 p.m. – Legislative training, presented by Lynne Schlosser

2 p.m. – 3 p.m. – Overview of MASWM Strategic Plan, presented by Katie Jones

3 p.m. – 4 p.m. – Medical Marijuana

Regulations, presented by Lyndall Fraker, director of Regulation and Licensure, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

4 p.m. – 5 p.m. – MESA: Purpose, Priorities and Planning 2020

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. – Social hour – Cash bar and hors d’oeuvres

Dinner on your own!

Tuesday, Jan. 28:

7 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. – Legislative breakfast at the Missouri State Capitol

10 a.m. – Legislative meetings at the Missouri State Capitol

MASWM

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Mission

Sheltered Workshops in Missouri share a common mission of providing dignified and meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

If you have questions, please contact President Aaron Martin, phone: (816) 796-7070 or email: amartin@jobonekc.org; Legislative Co-Chair Brian Hogan – (816) 483-1620 or bhogan@bvinds.org

Missouri Workshops: A Decade of Challenges and Success

As we wrap up this decade, it's amazing to think back to all that was accomplished – the technology, education, advancements and opportunities. We lost a planet, the iPad was released, A-Team was considered an old TV show.

For MASWM, our world focuses on creating employment for every interested individual with a disability. To accomplish this, you creatively adapted tools, adjusted ergonomics, leaned production lines, encouraged families, engaged staff, taught soft skills, attempted task after task until you found that perfect job match for an individual. It is your persistence and heart that makes employment a reality for so many who would otherwise be without.

As an association, we have created employment for over 12,000 people with

disabilities this decade. We have granted opportunity to youth who needed that first work experience which allowed them to build upon to competitive employment. We have made a safe, prideful workplace for others to call their career. We have guided new managers through peer mentorship and provided resources for our employees to self-advocate.

Our legislative support deepened as the members truly understood that every person is unique. People with disabilities are



*Katie Jones,
MASWM Executive Director*

individuals who have the right of choice to design their own career pathways, just as those without disabilities.

The past decade had hardships and growth, and I expect the upcoming to do the same. Our mission will continue and we will strategically plan to ensure employment for people with disabilities in Missouri is dignified, meaningful and available.

– Katie Jones,
MASWM Executive Director

CMSE Celebrates 50 Years of Service in Columbia

In the past year, Columbia organizations serving those with disabilities celebrated a major milestone.

Central Missouri Subcontracting Enterprises (CMSE) and CMSE Giving Gardens celebrated their 50-year anniversary of providing employment opportunities to adults with severe disabilities in Boone County.

Unlike other 501(c)(3) not-for-profits, much of CMSE's revenue is generated through the contract work they do for business partners, as well as sales from their retail greenhouse.

During this ceremony, CMSE recog-

nized these business partners who helped this happen. CMSE also received resolutions from both the Missouri State Senate and House of Representatives, as well as a proclamation from both the Boone County Commission and the City of Columbia. CMSE would like to thank all of their business partners, local officials,

board, staff and many others who have helped make this happen.



Progressive Industries Receives Bayer/Farmers Community Grant

Pemiscot Progressive Industries in Hayti recently received a \$2,500 grant from the Bayer Fund with America's Farmers Growing Communities.

Pemiscot County farmers Bobby and Sandy Ketchum directed the funds through the grant program. Workshop Executive Director Angela Hudgens said that Progressive Industries will use the funds to help provide employees with hot lunches, a unique and important program.

"We are one of the only sheltered workshops in Missouri to provide meals free of charge to their employees," Angela explained. "You can imagine the cost of feeding approximately 30 people snacks and lunch five days a week. So this award is definitely an honor and a blessing to receive."

The 10-year-old America's Farmers Grow Communities program offers farmers the chance to direct a \$2,500 donation to a nonprofit of their choice.

“Choice” Supporters Work for Balanced Employment Options

(As this newsletter was being finalized, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights postponed their recommendations on Section 14(c) for 12 months. Advocacy efforts by organizations like A Team have encouraged the commission to do site visits and gather more data. The site visits are currently limited to Virginia and Vermont for travel reasons, but the delay allows time for additional input.)

A Nov. 16 meeting of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights illustrated a critical challenge facing workshops in Missouri and across the country.

Held in Washington, D.C., the meeting focused on Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which allows organizations like workshops to compensate workers with significant disabilities at rates below the current federal minimum wage based on the individual's level of measured productivity.

Tracy Gritsenko of A Team Missouri was among those attending the meeting Nov. 16. She and the other Missouri representatives, along with members of A Team USA, tried to communicate why 14(c) helps ensure a full range of employment choices and how Missouri utilizes 14(c) to dramatically increase employment options for people with disabilities, including severe disabilities.

A Team members and others discovered a somewhat one-sided dialogue.

“I was hopeful the discussion would be more balanced,” Tracy noted. “Nearly all of the panel members seemed against 14(c). Some of the things they said weren't even true.”

Tracy noted that one problem involves a lack of awareness of the Missouri Model, a workshop strategy that emphasizes multiple employment options, including community employment.

“There were several comments that sheltered workshops were not subject to OSHA inspections,” Tracy said, noting what every workshop manager knows very well – workshops are subject to OSHA standards and inspections just like any small business.

Others described workshops in very negative terms and doubted parents support them. “I told them that, in most cases, parents founded the workshops,” Tracy said. “And workshops continue to be the best option for thousands with severe and moderate disabilities. They're safe, their friends are there, and they take pride in their work.”

Parental investment in workshops remains a major workshop strength. “We have nearly 6,000 families in Missouri using workshops,” she added. “That needs to be understood. Without workshops, a lot of their adult children will end up stuck at home, losing what they've gained with training, socializing

and more. Parents know the value of workshops.”

Another commissioner asked for data to back up some of the comments – a question Tracy answered eagerly. “We operate under the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,” she noted. “We can report factual data to show how it's working, to debunk some of the other things that were being said.”

The meeting may end up being a plus, despite the negatives. A Team Missouri has been working with like-minded organizations nationally for several years, but allegations like those at the Civil Rights meeting has motivated many here and across the nation.

“There was one exchange where someone said staff members who work with people with disabilities are uncaring, even greedy,” Tracy recalled. “Fortunately, there was a congressman who was very familiar with workshops, and he knew first hand that wasn't true. He noted that all of the people he had ever met cared deeply about workshops and the people they serve.”

Tracy noted that the work of A Team must continue and urged managers to stay informed while helping others stay informed.

“This is important,” she said. “Ultimately, these things could pave the way for our workshops to be taken away.”

School Students Visit Gateway in Eldon

Every year for the last five years, a teacher from Eldon Upper Elementary brings her class into Gateway Industries to visit and see what Gateway does.

The students come in and listen to the employees explain



their jobs. Then, for the next two hours, they work side by side with Gateway employees. Mrs. Webery works hard to teach her class about kindness and what it means to have a disability. She believes that if this teaching starts when they are young, the students will be advocates for others with disabilities.

Area Meetings Continue Success with Questions, Answers

MASWM district meetings continue to feature small groups of managers discussing everything from local challenges to national issues. The most recent include almost back-to-back sessions in Districts 3 and 6.

The meetings are being held around the state to exchange ideas between individual managers, hear opinions and questions on how MASWM can help, and to discuss challenges facing workshops as a whole. The smaller meetings allow time and attention to each manager and his or her questions.

Attendance often includes the district's director and other MASWM officers, as well as Executive Director Katie Jones. Managers from outside the hosting district are welcome, and several members have taken advantage of meeting times that suit their schedule or locations that may be more convenient.

The most recent meetings were held in western and central Missouri. District 3



District 3 Director and manager of Ideal Industries Heather Pugh hosted an area meeting at the shop in Richmond Dec. 13. The turnout may have included at least one Kansas City Chief's fan!

Director and Manager of Ideal Industries Heather Pugh hosted a meeting at her shop in Richmond. General Manager

Lacie Karr hosted the District 6 meeting at the Pulaski County Workshop in Richmond.

Canterbury Enterprises Earns Focus of TV News Feature

Canterbury Enterprises in Shrewsbury was the subject of special coverage on KCTI Fox2 television in St. Louis that featured the shop's efforts before the holidays.

Executive Director Charlie Fischer noted the shop's workers with disabilities did not mind the extra work. "By working at Canterbury, the employees feel a

sense of independence and empowerment," he noted. "I've never met a group of people who love coming to work so much, and some employees said they are bummed when they can't work on the weekends or because of having a snow day."

The Fox2 program was broadcast live from the workshop with reporter Kather-

ine Hessel. She noted that Canterbury Enterprises is a nonprofit organization that employs people with disabilities in St. Louis County and City.

During her visit, employees were working on stuffing stockings to be sold at American Carnival Mart.

Missouri State Treasurer Visits Web-Co

Missouri State Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick recently toured Web-Co Custom Industries, a sheltered workshop in Webster County that employs over 80 Missourians with disabilities.

Web-Co General Manager Mike Frazier said Treasurer Fitzpatrick viewed Web-Co's efforts to provide packaging, assembly, recycling and shredding services to businesses in Marshfield and surrounding areas.

Treasurer Fitzpatrick also talked with employees about the Mo-Able program, which allows individuals with disabilities to save and invest money without losing eligibility for certain public benefits.



CASCO Hosts Lt. Governor In Harrisonville

CASCO Area Workshop in Harrisonville recently hosted a tour with Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe and some of his staff members, along with Harrisonville officials Mayor Judy Bowman and Alderman Judy Reece.



Bates County Industries in Butler was honored to have State Senator Ed Emory share the workshop's Thanksgiving feast. He also took time to speak with each employee at the shop.



2 Rivers Industries in Hannibal has launched a glass recycling effort. Manager Melonie Nevels reports that the shop has begun recycling glass products and turning them into usable sand products that can be used for sandblasting, swimming pool filters and landscaping.



Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe wasn't bashful about assembling one of the jobs at CASCO Area Workshop in Harrisonville during a tour Nov. 20.



CASCO employee Ed Wyatt (left) welcomed Harrisonville Mayor Judy Bowman and Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe during a visit Nov. 20.



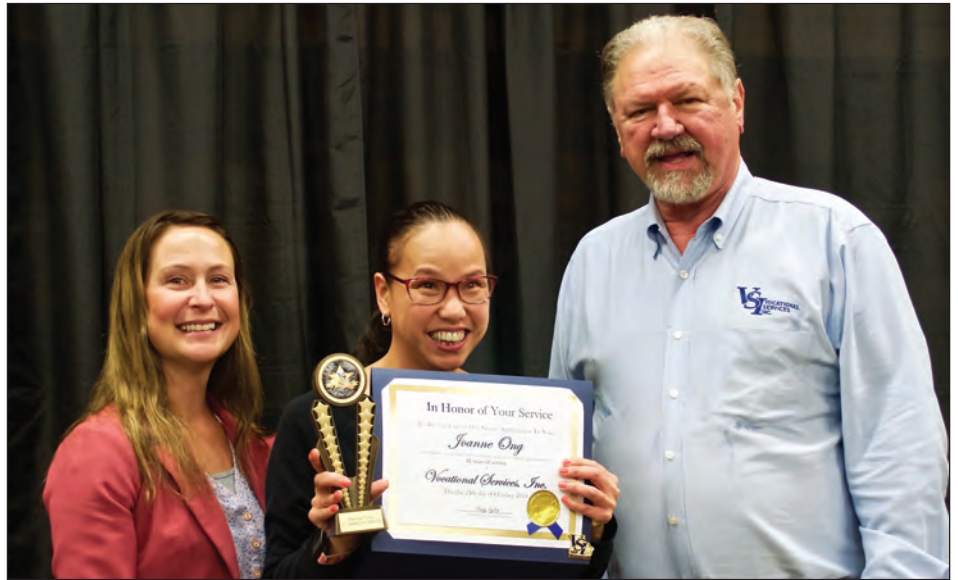
CASCO Community Resource Specialist Joe Barron (center) joined Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe displaying a signed card welcoming him during a visit Nov. 20.

VSI Honors Employees for Length of Service

Vocational Services, Inc., in recently held its 2019 Length of Service award ceremony for nearly 200 workshop employees in Liberty and North Kansas City.

Employees like JoAnne Ong were honored for their years of work at one of the three Kansas City-area workshops. JoAnne is celebrating her 21st year with VSI. Other honorees were recognized for tenure ranging from three to over 30 years.

The ceremonies were held Thursday, Oct. 24, for employees at the North Kansas City shop and those at VSI's two Liberty locations were recognized Friday, Oct. 25. A special guest for the Thursday event was Katie Jones, executive director of the Missouri Association of Sheltered Workshop Managers. She joined VSI Executive Director Randy Hylton presenting the awards.



JoAnne Ong (center) was recently recognized for 21 years of employment at Vocational Services, Inc., which operates workshops in North Kansas City and Liberty. Making the presentations were Executive Director Katie Jones of the Missouri Association of Sheltered Workshop Managers, and VSI Executive Director Randy Hylton.

Richmond News Details Workshop Challenges

The Richmond News recently published an in-depth series of articles on workshops and the threats to their existence posed by wage laws and regulations.

Written by editor Jack “Miles” Ventimiglia, the series noted how “fair-sounding equal pay laws” could devastate a workshop like Ideal Industries in Richmond, as well as workshops across Missouri and the nation.

The series included extensive detail on how workshops operate and the laws and regulations that threaten them. Interviews included workshop manager Heather Pugh in Richmond, as well as officials across the state.

A good summary occurred in one arti-

cle: “If employers are forced to pay minimum wage to people unable to keep pace with able workers, then employers will stop using workshops, which will close.” The article went on to note that workshop closures occurred in Washington state, where workshops are required to pay disabled workers the minimum wage.

Another article in the series focused on Ideal Industries’ employee Rosetta Cates. She provided an in-depth view of working at Ideal and what it means to employees with disabilities.

“Ideal Industries is a place where people with all kinds of disabilities can go and work, talk and enjoy being with others that have the same obstacles in life as

they do,” she wrote. “A place where we can go do a job and not be judged on how slow or fast we go. We work at our own pace, which can and does change from day to day.”

A tour of the facility was another article focus. The tour group included representatives for Sen. Roy Blunt and Congressman Emanuel Cleaver II, as well as state Representatives Peggy McLaugh and Jim Neely. Other tour participants included local, county and state officials.

The series included reporting on the structure of workshops and their relationship with other organizations. The challenging efforts to secure business contracts that fund much of the workshop operations were explained.

Branson Meeting Features Vital Topics and Training

Outstanding training plus discussion of opportunities and challenges facing Missouri workshops were part of the MASWM fall meeting in Branson, Sept. 30-Oct. 1.

The event drew over 70 people from nearly 50 Missouri workshops. MASWM’s new Executive Director Katie

Jones was welcomed and quickly helped with both long- and short-range planning, and more.

One highlight involved three Monday training sessions coordinated by Board member Linda Kimrey. The training began with SWIM veteran Leslie Miles presenting “Work Comp 101,” a com-

prehensive overview of state and federal law, frequent injuries and how best to report claims. The second and third sessions involved extensive participation by workshop managers and staff on calculating overhead costs and other workshop challenges.

Parents, Guardians and People with Disabilities Speak Out

Although managers are often the most visible, parents, guardians and people with disabilities are the grassroots foundation of workshops.

Almost all of Missouri's nearly 90 workshops were founded in large part by parental initiative. Even today, many workshop boards include parents and other loved ones who know firsthand the irreplaceable need for safe, productive work that includes like-minded friends and co-workers. Others include professionals like public administrators who also see firsthand the value these organizations provide.

As part of a recent survey, several representatives of these groups commented on workshops and their importance in their lives. Here are some examples:

"...My grandson Jonathan works at a workshop in Camdenton and is doing really good with the work that he does. He was just employee of the month, and he is doing super. It would be a tragedy if they shut the workshop down. So please keep the workshop open for his sake."

– Diane, grandparent of worker with disability

"...I believe it would be unfair and unjust to take the program away from

people who are trying to take advantage of this wonderful program and have the benefits to better themselves ... This workshop is teaching them the skills they need to move forward in life. That would be the equivalent of taking all the schools away from children who want to learn."

– Brandy, aunt of worker with disability

"...I have intellectual development disabilities ... I like my job because I can go at my own pace. My supervisors are nice and help me when I need them. I have made lots of friends there. I like making extra money to go out and do things. I also feel safe at my job. Please don't forget about me and close down my job."

– Ashley, worker with a disability
"...It is important that we have this employment opportunity, to be able to have friends in coworkers, work to do and feel like an important part of a team. We do great work and have a good time doing it. Please don't take this away from us."

– Linda, worker with a disability
"...I have worked there (workshop) for ten years so far and greatly enjoy my job, as do most others where I work. I would like to work (here) another ten years, at least. No one where I work feels

as though their rights are being violated or that they are being segregated in any way. There are some of us who cannot enter the competitive workforce; what are we to do? Getting and maintaining a competitive job is not always realistic for some people. Please think of us, our feelings and needs when considering and making decisions that will affect our lives and future generations of people with disabilities."

– Jonathan, a worker with a disability

"...The sheltered workshops are a must and truly a provision in our society. It's proactive. If society eliminates such programming, this office can be sure of a loss of physical conditions, mental conditions, monetary investments, rewards, rise in cost of healthcare needs and rise in cost of home maintenance fees to provide the engagement of social settings, and we will see an increase of unsuccessful adults with too much time on their hands! WE NEED the workshops. I support 14c. Please listen to the individuals who are informed of what this program offers. Please listen to me."

– Vicky Fish, Gentry County Public Administrator

Workshop Updates: New Managers, Contacts and More

Kingdom Projects in Fulton officially changed its name to Callaway County Extended Employment. The workshop also broke ground on a new commercial laundry service scheduled for completion early this year.

Janet Squibb is the new executive director at United Enterprises, Inc. in **Perryville**. Her email is janetsquibb@unitedenterprises.org.

2 Rivers Industries Executive Director/CEO Melonie Nevels has changed her address to mnevels@2riversind.org. 2 Rivers is located in **Hannibal**.

Manager Sarah Nash at Industrial Opportunities in **Kahoka** recently changed her last name. Her phone number is 660-727-2515.

The new manager at Callaway

County Extended Employment in **Fulton** is Rodney Shivers. His email is manager@kingdomprojects.org.

Mid-Mo Productivity & Packaging Specialists (MPPS) in **Moberly**, formerly Randolph County Sheltered Workshop,

has a new manager: Shari Pretz. Her email is spretz@mpps.rocks, and her office phone is 660-263-6202, ex. 405.

Jack Cronin has succeeded retiring Judd Chesnut as manager of **Lamar** Enterprises. Jack's email is jack_cronin@sbcglobal.net, and the phone number is 417-682-3506.

Gina Tackett is the new manager with Earthwise Industries in **Troy**. Ms. Tackett comes from a social services background. Former manager Jeff Reeg stayed as a consultant to assist in the transition. Gina's email is gina@earthguys.com, and her phone number will be 636-528-8869.

Byron Myers is the new president/CEO of Specialty Industries of **St. Joseph**. Byron's email is Byron@specialty-industries.com.



Callaway County Extended Employment in Fulton is developing a new commercial laundry service to expand its ability to provide employment for people with disabilities.