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The briefs

Library book sale set for Saturday

Books for a quarter? For 50 cents? Only at the Friends of Feb. used book sale, sponsored by Friends of the Arlington Heights Memorial Library. The sale runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and noon to 3 p.m. Sunday in the Hendrickson Room on the second floor of the library, 500 N. Dunton Ave.

Hardcover books will be available for 50 cents, paperbacks for 25 cents. Items with a "Friends of the Library" sticker will be half-price, including a large selection of puzzles and games. A silent auction also will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, while on Sunday, a grocery bag of items is only \$2. Book totes will be on sale for \$10 on both days. For details, call (847) 392-0100.

Taoist Tai Chi to host open house

The Taoist Tai Chi Society will hold an open house and Chinese New Year celebration from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at 6 S. Dryden Ave., Arlington Heights. Taoist arts will be demonstrated, including Taoist Tai Chi, Lok Hup, Sword and Sabre.

Taoist Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese exercise that promotes health and the dual cultivation of body and mind. It combines a series of moves and stretches that are best for health and balance rather than for competition or self-defense.

The Taoist Tai Chi Society is a nonprofit, volunteer organization with branches in more than 500 countries. Classes are offered weekdays, evenings and weekends in Arlington Heights and evenings in Lombard and Chicago. For details, call (847) 398-6244.

Neighborhood

On the right road

Avenues to Independence helps disabled find work

By EILEEN O. DADAY
Daily Herald Correspondent

On an assembly line in a Wheeling warehouse, Sara Lee condiments such as creamers, sugars and stir sticks, are wrapped up into bags and spit out into boxes, before they make their way to hotel rooms across the country.

Guiding their way down the conveyor belt are developmentally disabled adults working side by side with nondisabled employees to create a blended work force. Together they can produce up to 80 packages per minute, or up to 1,500 cases per week.

"The concept of a blended work force is a buzz word in the industry, and it's a concept that really resonates with us," said Ron Reeves, contract sales director with Avenues to Independence, a Park Ridge-based agency that works with developmentally disabled adults.

"That's what we're all about," Reeves said. "It's right in our name, we're helping people with disabilities to have every opportunity to participate to the fullest in society." This year Avenues is celebrating its 50th anniversary of serving clients in the Des Plaines, Wheeling, Park Ridge and Niles areas. The agency maintains residential services and actively looks to place clients in jobs in their communities, or in the new work center.

Last year, Avenues officials consolidated two work centers into the 48,000-square-foot site in Wheeling, which includes offices and a training center, as well as a separate warehouse that houses its contract businesses. There are 126 individuals working at the warehouse, doing everything from tabletop assembly to de-manufacturing of copiers, printers and scanners for Canon USA in Hanover Park. In all, Avenues contracts with 40 area businesses, and they're not done yet.

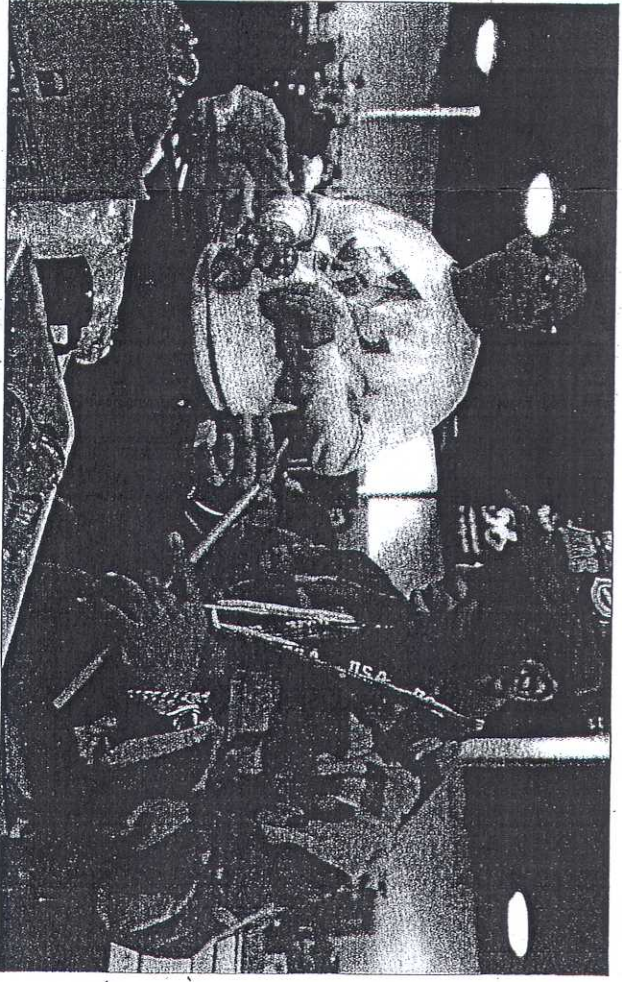
"We're taking a business approach and marketing ourselves as a secondary package," he said. "We have quality-conscious workers who are able to deliver quality products, meet delivery deadlines and be price-competitive."

Ed Derrickson and Brian Ray are two of those quality-conscious employees, who trained recently on the condiment assembly line. Both men live in one of Avenues' group homes in Park Ridge, and commute to the work center every day. They have worked on a vari-



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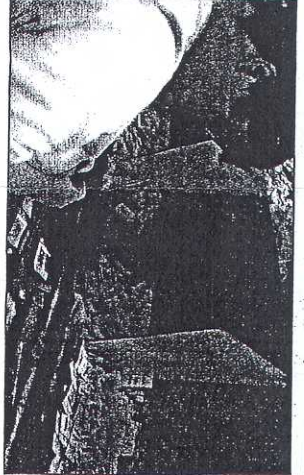
PHOTOS BY JOE LEWNAARD/DAILY HERALD

Ed Derrickson, left, and Tom Jenkins are among a group of disabled adults assembling caps for sports bottles, alongside nondisabled employees at Avenues for Independence in Wheeling. At left, Noreen Katsiling places sweetener packets in their respective locations for packaging at the facility.

Avenues officials say that, in a nutshell, is what drove them to expand their work center. It gives more clients a chance to work and earn a paycheck, which gives meaning and purpose to their lives.

"Here we have room to grow," Reeves said, "both businesswise and in terms of employing clients." As it is, contract sales are projected to hit \$770,000 this year, which represents a double-digit growth over the last 10 years, and Reeves feels they can take up to 100 more workers over the next few years.

"This program, as well as the thrift shop, are the only programs to experience revenue growth," Reeves said. In times of decreased state funding, which threatens the very existence of the agency, revenue growth is another buzz word.



ety of jobs but were recommended by their respective job counselors to move up to the machines. Ray said he liked working on the machines, and couldn't wait to get back to work after taking a lunch break. Derrickson agreed, saying he liked the work and liked meeting new people. "And I like to make good money," he said.