

NEWS OF JOBS

Community Programs Helping People With Disabilities Live Better Lives

(NAPSA)—There are more than 17 million Americans with some kind of a work disability and about 5 million have a job, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Volunteers of America is one of the national nonprofit organizations that, in recent years, has established programs designed to help individuals with developmental disabilities lead fuller lives.

These programs include work training that helps develop self-help skills, gives individuals a greater opportunity to make decisions about their future, and provides support services and group homes.

Serving people with disabilities became a national priority for Volunteers of America last year. The organization increased the number of people they served from about 3,900 to more than 5,500—a 40 percent growth—and intends to continue to expand its efforts to provide individualized services.

“Each year, nationwide, thousands of individuals with significant disabilities are receiving job training for the first time and are entering the workforce and finding jobs. This new community-based awareness of helping people with disabilities develop to their fullest capacity is an inspiring challenge,” said Volunteers of America President Charles Gould. “It’s amazing to see how individuals with disabilities respond and are then able to be employed and enjoy social interaction in a community setting when given the opportunity.”

One such independent community-based program formed by parents of individuals with dis-



Community-based programs create a win-win situation for individuals with disabilities.

abilities is Mount Vernon Lee Enterprises (MVLE).

It reports that in 2002 more than 60 percent of the 300 people with developmental disabilities it serves went to work each day at jobs sites, while the remaining 40 percent were in work or work training programs in their center-based workshop.

The philosophy of the program, according to Tim Farr, MVLE president is “to create an exciting future one person at a time. The goal is to create a win-win situation for each consumer we serve with disabilities.”

Volunteers of America provides individualized services to people with disabilities in 12 states. Last year, the organization served nearly 1.7 million people.

For more information about community-based programs for people with developmental disabilities visit: www.VolunteersofAmerica.org and www.mvle.org.