



At We Grow Dreams, we're asked 100 times a year, "What do you do here?" Our usual answer is that we work with the disabled and special needs population to provide job training and employment opportunities. The next words we try to offer are that our Team Members are actual employees, making a real wage, working with others to learn skills in the horticulture and greenhouse environment.

The fact of the matter is, what we really do at We Grow Dreams is help change people's lives. And while it's not an easy process, it is one of the most rewarding experiences offered in our area or anywhere in the country.

How rare you might ask – this year, we have had guests visit our facility from Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana and even Chicago's Chinatown in search of what they can do to help their populations employ more and more people with disabilities. Just two weeks ago we had a young girl and her mom drive to West Chicago from downstate Danville, Illinois for a day trip to see our place and discuss what we do.



You see, Victoria has just graduated from her high school transition program at age 22 and is leaning towards going to her junior college for horticulture classes but first she wanted to see more about what we did. She was thrilled when we let her help two customers by running their sales through the cash register, helping take their purchases to the cars and ending with a huge "THANK YOU for coming to We Grow Dreams." I came back into the retail area to find her mom's eyes filled with tears, in a very emotional and joyous state. In four years of working at various jobs, it was Victoria's first time ringing up a sale and helping a customer with product.

Natalie came to us eight months ago in need of training and learning acceptable work behavior. She was quick to judge work she didn't want to do and had little or no stamina for the hours needed. Her job coach has been tireless in her efforts to make sure Natalie understands and complies with directions in a respectful manner, helping build Natalie's confidence and earning a paycheck at the same time. Behavior change in anyone is a very tough job, but it is something we work on every day with our team members, while helping change their lives.

Take Richard, for example, who came to us 2 years ago with a desire to learn more about plants and their habits. He took an immediate liking to prepping and filling pots. Richard was a very poor listener and usually spent more time trying to work around a job than performing the job. He also liked to talk over instructions so many times; he had to redo his own work to get things straightened out. Throughout the process, he learned about taking instruction and getting things right, enabling him to help others with their chores. Just a couple weeks ago at age 24, Richard successfully passed his driver's test and received his license, which in turn led to him getting ANOTHER part time job with a local park district that he drives to by himself.



As of this appeal, we have 35 unique stories to tell about young people ages 15 to 35 who count on We Grow Dreams for job training and, for many, as their sole employer, which is simply not possible without your support.

As to where your funds are needed most, our number one issue continues to be our physical plant and its crumbling superstructure. Our greenhouses require constant upkeep for new fans, heaters, water lines and planting benches. Just this summer, our main well pump failed and set us back \$4000, even after a generous donation from our installer. Our neighbor to the west has contributed huge amounts of time, material and equipment to help us successfully

manage a brand new \$30,000 planting project that we hope will repeat next year as we try to focus more attention on growing more product.

Immediate needs for this fall are to replace worn out poly (roofs) on three of our growing houses at about \$1000 a house and our well worn delivery truck needs a new rear door gate for \$1600 and new tires for \$1500...and we just can't wait for those \$2000 a month heating bills throughout the winter.

When all is said and done, what We Grow Dreams provides to our community is truly unmatched in helping change people's lives. We're open for our Team Members twelve months a year making sure we're consistent in our pledge to them to be here when they need us and be a part of something they can be proud of. Knowing how to dress, how to work, how to punch in and out, how to distinguish between a co-worker, supervisor and a customer are not easy things for people with cognitive issues and, while we are not looking for easy, we are always looking to help our Team Members get better and be more engaged in the world we live in.

Your generous donation to We Grow Dreams will help make a difference in people's lives – it's just that simple and we thank you for your help. Please return the addressed envelope with your check made out to We Grow Dreams or if you prefer, go online to donate at www.wegrowdreams.org and click on the Donate tab. We will make sure you receive a tax donation letter for your records. We hope you have a terrific holiday season and thank you again for helping us change people's lives!

Gregg Bettcher
Executive Director

We Grow Dreams, Inc., is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to provide people with disabilities the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives and to train and work in a supportive, safe and caring environment while producing and providing products and services to the community. In this pursuit, we honor the concepts of human dignity, respect, hard work, fellowship and friendship.