

Enclave Services: An Office with a Purpose

By Judy Hayward

“How do you like your job?” the Enclave Services supervisor, Janice Robinson, asks. “I love it!” Penny Shuping responds. From a nearby work station, David Holmes pauses in his work and shyly echoes her sentiment: “I love my job too!” Ms Shuping resumes her task, frequently reaching to carefully straighten the growing stack of *The Permanente Journals* on her desk. At a nearby desk, Beth Grodem focuses on assembling a mailing from the Health Education Department.



Paul McCormick, Norman Tartar, Marci Gunther, Angela Fox, Beth Grodem, Trish O'Donnell, and Martine Allaert are among the staff in the KPNW Enclave.

She glances momentarily at the lead staff on duty, who compliments her on her progress, and then returns to her task. The atmosphere in the pleasant, spacious workroom is both calm and purposeful. It could be a clerical production room in any number of large organizations.

But this is no ordinary office. These are just three of a dozen workers who comprise Enclave Services, a supported work environment at Kaiser Permanente Northwest (KPNW) for persons with disabilities. Although they have consistently demonstrated that they are capable—even meticulous—at performing a wide variety of clerical tasks—and they are clearly devoted to the work they do—they might not have found em-

ployment in conventional jobs. Finding productive work for people with disabilities like Ms Shuping, Mr Holmes, and Ms Grodem is difficult. Potential employers often overlook them, believing that training and supervision pose difficult challenges.

KPNW is different. In 1987, when Paul Crowther, Executive Director of the nonprofit Oregon Employment Service Company (OESCO) approached KPNW human resources managers to propose a permanent jobs program for persons with disabilities, they listened. OESCO pays the salaries for the supervisor and lead staff from grants and government funds and bills for jobs completed to fund the wages for the staff. Mr Crowther had previous experience with more limited programs at St Vincent de Paul and was eager to expand the concept and to provide permanent, meaningful work for persons with disabilities. He knew that businesses could benefit from a partnership with OESCO.

From the start, recalls Mr Crowther, KPNW demonstrated a strong commitment to the project. Then Human Resources manager Tom Williamson and his associates Cheryl Harmon, Mary Moore, and Carolyn Gomez dedicated a permanent workplace in the regional administration headquarters, incorporated OESCO's paid staff at the worksite, and gave the department its distinctive name—Enclave Services.

Today Enclave Services has one supervisor, three staff lead personnel, and 13 clerical workers: Most are high school graduates; all must be able to sign their names, catch a bus to and from work, negotiate hallways and elevators to and from the cafeteria, and demonstrate clerical skill. Enclave Services employees typically work part time, averaging 10-16 hours per week. Two staff leads are always present at the worksite.

Program participants have remarkable longevity. Janice Robinson, lead supervisor at Enclave Services, has been with the program since 1992. Her clerical workers have similarly long work histories. Ms Grodem, for example, has been an Enclave Services employee since the day it started in 1988. Most want to work more hours than they are assigned. A waiting list attests to the



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Beth Grodem labels *The Permanente Journal*.

need for more programs like Enclave Services.

Beth's mother, Gail Grodem, sings Kaiser Permanente's and Paul Crowther's praises for what the program has meant to her daughter. "I give Kaiser Permanente only bouquets of flowers," she says. "I

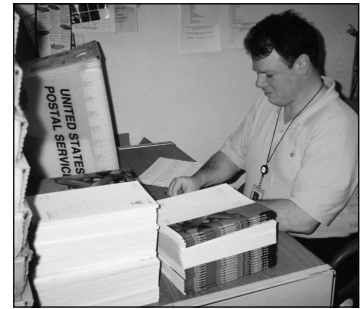
can't imagine Beth not having that job. What it has meant to her confidence, her self-worth, her ability to perform is incalculable." Her admiration for Mr Crowther, Ms Robinson, and the entire Enclave Services staff is unconditional. "Paul and his staff bring an extraordinary degree of professionalism to the department."

Who are Enclave Services' customers? By far its biggest is *The Permanente Journal*. The publication depends on Enclave Services for labeling and distribution of its 100,000 copies each year. Enclave Services regularly serves other departments as well: Health Educa-

tion, the Claims Department, and Human Resources are steady customers. In fact, wherever there is a need for bulk mailing, inserts of materials into packets, collating, labeling, assembling, and other repetitive tasks, Enclave can and does provide support. Ms Robinson lauds the quality of work performed at Enclave Services: "They do excellent work" is her succinct assessment.

The Enclave Services workroom is filled with cartons of as-yet untouched assignments awaiting their turn. Colorful brochures, paper inserts, envelopes, and labels range along shelves that ring the workspace. "I need more books, please," Ms Shuping sings. "Thank you," she says as a new stack lands at her workstation. Ms Robinson approaches Mr Holmes. "You're doing a great job," she says. He brightens.

It's a typical workday for the Enclave Services staff and another day to take pride and satisfaction in their jobs—jobs they probably would never have had without Paul Crowther, KPNW, and Enclave Services. ❖



Paul McCormick hard at work on journals.

Dear Dr Janisse,

My developmentally disabled daughter, Beth Grodem, is employed by the OESCo Kaiser Permanente Enclave. She has been a member of the Enclave since its inception. Both my daughter and I are deeply grateful and appreciative for the affiliation and support of KP for the OESCo Enclave.

Thank you and everyone at KP for all the support and your participation in making this a reality.

This job is my daughter's identity. In spite of Beth's limited speech and abilities, she has the job support to perform, succeed and become a contributing member of society. I am not exaggerating when I say that Beth IS her job and her job IS her life. She feels important and is. The self-esteem, self-worth, and dignity she has learned on this job is what has been fundamental to her ever-increasing confidence and success. Her work experience has so enriched her life. The joint KP and OESCo relationship has given her and others in the Enclave the opportunity for a better quality of life.

When Beth and I are out in the community or we are together in the building, I am overwhelmed by the many KP employees who come up to us to greet Beth and the joy and enrichment given to my daughter by these wonderful individuals.

Dr Janisse, THANK YOU for the job and support for my daughter and the other disabled adults in the Enclave. Beth and her family join me in sending our deepest thanks to you and all the KP family.

Most sincerely,
Gail B Grodem
Portland, Oregon

**For information on developing
a program in your region,
please contact:**

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