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KANDU begins annual fundraising campaign drive

By KYLIE BALK-YAATENEN
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JANESVILLE—KANDU Industries is beginning its annual giving campaign, with the goal of raising \$40,000 before Dec. 31. The money raised will help expand existing programs and increase the opportunities for people the organization works with.

Executive Director Kathy Hansen said over the next two decades, the number of seniors with age-related disabilities is expected to double in Rock County. She said there are approximately 900 people with disabilities in Rock County between the ages of 14-24.

Hansen said donations would help expand KANDU's Livin' & Learn' day services program. She said the organization definitely relies on community support to help facilitate such expansions.

"KANDU is at a point where we are bursting at the seams, we do have the programs that we know we have to grow to be able to serve Rock County," she said. "Going forward we are looking at a new and bigger facility."

48 years with KANDU



ANTHONY WAHL/AWAHL@GAZETTEXTRA.COM

Judy Cowan speaks into her son Dan's ear while picking him up for the day from KANDU Industries' day service program. Dan is being recognized at an upcoming 'Snowball' dance for his 48 years at the KANDU Industries.

Company to mark Cowan's milestone at 'Snowball'

By KYLIE BALK-YAATENEN
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JANESVILLE—At KANDU Industries' 'Snowball' on Dec. 9, Dan Cowan will be recognized for his 48 years as a client.

Dan's mother, Judy Cowan, has been his caretaker since he was born. She said being

part of KANDU has been a very important part of her son's life.

"I'm surprised about what Dan can do sometimes," Cowan said. "If he's looking at a book with pictures of dogs on it; even though he can't read it, he knows it's about dogs."

Cowan said that Dan was her first born. And, when he

was born, there weren't many resources for children with disabilities.

"We knew something was wrong but there wasn't a lot of information. But slowly, as the years passed, we learned more about what he was going through," she recalls.

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Cowan

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"We knew something was wrong but there wasn't a lot of information. But slowly, as the years passed, we learned more about what he was going through," she recalls.

Dan, now 68 years old, is mentally disabled and currently participates in KANDU's Day Service program, which allows him to do activities and go on field trips.

Cowan said that she learned about KANDU from a friend of her son's special education teacher. At that time, the organization was just starting out and she learned it was a way for disabled people to find work in the community.

"The need was there, and so when we heard about it we moved from

Beloit to get Dan into the program," she recalls.

She said her son has had many great experiences with KANDU and he loves spending time there.

"Dan doesn't say much, but I am sure if he was the one talking that he would say 'friend' because the kids there are really like brothers and sisters," she said. "Or he would say 'check' because he knows the check is more than just a five dollar bill."

She said KANDU offers a lot to people like her son and they are treated like human beings there, and there is something for every type of person.

"No matter what it takes, if you have a disabled person, get them into some of the things KANDU offers," she said. "It makes them feel important, they have friends and they get their own life. And they don't have to apply to this so-called normal life"



ANTHONY WAHL/AWAHL@GAZETTEEXTRA.COM

Client Service Manager Carmen Jones smiles as Dan Cowan, 68, looks through a collection of mens clothing at KANDU Industries for an upcoming 'Snowball' dance for their clients. Dan is being recognized during the dance for his 48 years at the KANDU Industries. He now attends KANDU's day service program which allows for him to partake in activities and go on field trips with his peers.

KANDU clients special guests at inaugural 'Snowball'

By KYLIE BALK-YAATENEN
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JANESVILLE—Non-profit KANDU Industries, of Janesville, is giving the people who participate in its work and life skill programs a chance to dress up and have some fun this holiday season.

KANDU helps people with disabilities find jobs in the community and has a production center for those who can't go out into the community. Different programs serve people with Alzheimer's and dementia. One program helps people learn how to take care of themselves, teaching things like cooking, cleaning and social skills.

Its inaugural Snowball dinner and dance for its clients is 5 to 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 9 at its corporate office 1741 Adel St., Janesville.

KANDU Executive Director Kathy Hansen said people that the organization works with are called 'clients.' Hansen said that this helps KANDU remember who they are really working for and who they are always trying to serve.

SHOPPING DAY

On Nov. 2, KANDU held a shopping day for the clients to try on clothes to wear to the Snowball. Donations of dresses, suits, shoes, jewelry, purses and other accessories came from groups like Gifts Men's Shelter, area schools and businesses like Certified Financial Specialists in Madison.



LINDA DIEDRICH/KANDU INDUSTRIES

Clients with KANDU Industries try on outfits on Nov. 2 to wear to the organization's the first-annual Snowball dance.

"We ended up having more than we needed but it was perfect because it made it feel like a real shopping experience," Hansen said. "We made the board room into a store with full length mirrors, dressing rooms and shoes, purses, and jewelry; they had fake mimosas kind of like 'Pretty Woman.'"

"We just want to make it a really special night for them," she said.

'HAPPY TEARS'

KANDU client Nathan Bealeau

said he is very excited for the Snowball. He plans to wear a black suit and a red tie.

KANDU client Cheryl Marvin said she is also going to the Snowball and will be wearing a white dress and earrings she got for her birthday. She said she loved trying on dresses on shopping day.

"I cried when I saw myself in the mirror," she said. "They were happy tears because I looked so beautiful."

Bealeau said being a part of

KANDU has opened his eyes to many things.

"It has given me real life experiences and I like getting a paycheck," he said.

CLIENT SURVEY

Hansen said that the idea to hold the 'Snowball' event came up when clients responded to a survey, with many saying they'd like to hold a prom. Hansen said KANDU used to host a prom for clients and staff but it was shut down due to COVID and never brought back.

The Dec. 9 winter formal event will include DJ Chuck Wilson, hors d'oeuvres and dinner. KANDU's senior management team and board of directors plan to attend a black-and-white server uniforms and to take care of the clients all night.

CLIENT RECOGNITION

It will also be a night to recognize each of the clients for their years of service. More than 100 clients will be recognized. Hansen said the longest client has been a part of the organization for 48 years.

Hansen said KANDU has other events coming that it will need volunteer help with. She said donations are appreciated, as the organization hopes to expand its programs to be able to serve more people.

For more information about events and how to donate go to the KANDU's website: www.KANDUindustries.com