



A Newsletter from The Douglas Center: Fall 2023

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The Douglas Center Closing Schedule

- Columbus & Indigenous Peoples' Day: October 9th
- Thanksgiving Holiday: Nov. 23 & 24
- Holiday Break: Dec. 22 thru Jan. 1st
- Center Reopens: January 2nd |

The Douglas Center Launches "Employment Training Units" Program for Individuals with Disabilities

The Douglas Center recently launched their "Employment Training Units" program for adults living with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities. The program's official launch featured a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony held on Friday, August 25, 2023, as part of their Open House event. Participants in the ribbon cutting honors included Rifath Khan, CEO and Founder; Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen; and Bonnie Kahn Ognisanti, Niles Township Supervisor. This day-long Open House welcomed the public and offered a hands-on opportunity to gain insights into the unique challenges individuals with special needs encounter, as well as the remarkable progress they make towards achieving independence.



The Douglas Center Office Training Unit

The Douglas Center "Employment Training Units" program is designed to equip participants with the essential skills required to pursue potential job opportunities in office, hospitality, and retail settings. Each unit will provide specific work skills training to familiarize and inform program participants on what to expect from a position in these areas and enhance their knowledge, skills, and self-confidence needed as they seek out possible employment positions within the community. Beyond developing job-related skills, our participants will enhance their independence by mastering vital life skills, including financial management, household organization, time management, and personal hygiene. The Employment Training Units at The Douglas Center offer hands-on and community practicum training, allowing participants to observe and apply these skills in real-world scenarios.

Hospitality Unit

The Hospitality Unit provides work training in basic housekeeping skills including:

- Cleaning rooms, surfaces, and objects
- Bedmaking
- Dusting
- Organization
- Vacuuming
- Equipment and cleaning product use
- Folding clothes

Office Unit

The Office Unit provides work training in basic office skills including:

- Organizational skills
- Basic computer literacy
- Phone answering
- Copying, printing/Faxing
- Paper shredding
- Time-management
- Sorting and filing
- Mail opening and sorting

Retail Unit

The Retail Unit provides work training in basic retail skills including:

- Stocking and facing shelves
- Bagging
- Cashiering fundamentals
- Customer service/greeting
- Cleaning and maintenance
- Inventory
- Label reading for healthy eating choices
- Pricing

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 65.2 percent of people with disabilities are without employment. Additionally, despite a stronger and growing economy, people with disabilities are more likely to suffer from being underemployed.

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The Douglas Center Launches “Employment Training Units” (cont’d)

They experience a greater lack in pay, employment hours, training resulting in fewer opportunities for advancement or promotion. The lack of work and/or opportunities often lead to the onset of anxiety, depression, and mental and physical health issues. A recent article in the 8/22/23 issue of “Disability Scoop” stated that 99% of Adults with Autism have no employment services. The Douglas Center “Employment Training Units” program is designed to provide the basic skills training needed to better enable our participants to obtain employment within the community. Additionally, the skills acquired in this program will assist them in building a greater level of self-confidence and self-esteem.

The Douglas Center extends its heartfelt appreciation to Source America for their generous grant, which funded the equipment and supplies essential for our Office Unit. Source America continues to be a supportive partner that has contributed to the many positive employment outcomes for those in the AbilityOne program and our center as whole. The Douglas Center is greatly appreciative of their continued effort to find ways to advance employment opportunities for those with special needs.



"This skills training initiative seeks to unlock a world of new possibilities for employment and fulfillment for individuals with special needs. The Douglas Center is unwavering in its dedication to offering choices and opportunities to those we serve. With this program, we continue to fulfill our ongoing commitment, and we couldn't be more thrilled to embark on this journey!"

The Douglas Center extends our profound gratitude to the Niles Township Government for their generous grant, which provided the essential equipment and supplies for both our Hospitality and Retail training units. We also offer our sincere thanks to the Niles Township Food Pantry for their generous donation of food items, including canned goods, which will greatly benefit our Retail training unit.

"I am excited to introduce our 'Employment Training Units' program," stated Rifath Khan, Founder and CEO.



In 2024 The Douglas Center Celebrates its 25th Anniversary ...Stay Tuned!

As we step into the upcoming year, we are filled with gratitude as The Douglas Center prepares to mark a remarkable milestone—our 25th anniversary of providing essential community day services to individuals with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities.

From our humble beginnings in a small storefront facility with just three rooms, a small warehouse, and two dedicated staff members, we have grown and expanded our mission's reach substantially. What started with one participant and two staff members has blossomed into a thriving center that now serves approximately 100 participants daily, supported by a dedicated team of over 55+ staff members, consultants, therapists, contractors, volunteers, and student interns.

Our journey over the past quarter-century has been one of unwavering dedication to advancing our mission. We remain laser focused on our commitment to assisting individuals with special needs in enhancing their independent living skills and enriching their overall quality of life.

To celebrate this major milestone in our history, The Douglas Center has something very special in store. Stay tuned for exciting details about the upcoming celebration.



In 2024 The Douglas Center will celebrate 25 Years of Service to individuals with special needs. Stay tuned for the details!

Empowering Individuals with Disabilities through Community Integration and Volunteering

Volunteering isn't just about giving back; it's a journey of self-discovery, personal growth, and community enrichment. The benefits it brings are immeasurable, encompassing improved physical and mental health, enhanced social inclusion, the forging of friendships, boosted self-confidence, a heightened sense of purpose, the development of marketable job skills, and numerous opportunities for personal and professional growth.

For individuals with disabilities, the rewards of volunteering are equally significant. Volunteerism empowers them to break barriers, overcome social exclusion, and contribute to the betterment of society. At The Douglas Center, we recognize the transformative power of volunteering and its positive impact on those living with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Volunteering offers individuals with special needs the chance to support others, fostering a sense of fulfillment and self-esteem. It enables them to shift from being recipients of assistance to becoming active contributors within their communities. By engaging in volunteer activities, they discover their abilities, build confidence, and experience the joy of making a difference in the lives of others.

At The Douglas Center, our commitment to community integration and volunteering remains constant. We continuously seek collaborative volunteering opportunities for our program participants, as we believe that these experiences empower them to thrive and contribute to society.

Through community-based volunteering, our participants develop a sense of pride, responsibility, and purpose. As our list of volunteer opportunities continues to expand, here are some recent examples of the meaningful initiatives undertaken by our participants:

Talking Farm: Our participants visit Skokie's Talking Farm on a weekly basis. Here, approximately 30 to 40 program participants engage in hands-on experiences, cultivating and nurturing flowers for our "Flowers from the Heart" program. They actively participate in planting, nurturing, and harvesting the flowers, which are then used to create beautiful floral arrangements. These arrangements are personally delivered free of charge to community members. Recent recipients have included Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen, the Skokie Fire Department, Dist. 219 Special Ed Teachers, and many more.



Will's Place: Our participants recently delivered exquisite floral bouquets to Will's Place, a nonprofit café located in downtown Skokie. Will's Place is dedicated to creating meaningful employment and vocational training opportunities for adults with disabilities. Our participants' contributions speak to their desire to making a positive impact on the community.

As we continue to facilitate these incredible opportunities, we witness the remarkable growth and empowerment of our program participants. Their dedication to volunteering not only enriches their lives but also strengthens the bonds within our community. A special thank you to Will's Place for their generous and scrumptious donation of "Will's Famous Chocolate Chip Cookies" for our Open House. Will's Place is a non-profit café located in Skokie, creating meaningful jobs for adults with disabilities.

We invite you to join us in celebrating the invaluable contributions of individuals with disabilities in our community. By supporting community integration and volunteering, we can all play a part in creating a more inclusive and vibrant society.

Embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
through
volunteerism



Celebrating Excellence: David Banas Honored as “Outstanding Field Instructor BSW” for Summer 2023

The Douglas Center is delighted to share a moment of great pride as we celebrate the recognition of David Banas, our Director of Program and Clinical Services. David has been awarded the "Outstanding Field Instructor BSW Award - Summer 2023" by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. This honor is a testament to his dedication and commitment to mentoring the next generation of social work professionals. This is David's 2nd award. In 2022 he was awarded "Field Supervisor of the Year" by Loyola University.

David's exceptional service and unwavering support has made a profound impact on the students of the university's internship program. He was nominated for this award by students and faculty alike, reflecting the high-quality guidance and mentorship he provides to these budding professionals.

Under David's leadership, The Douglas Center's Internship program has flourished over the past three years. This program, currently in its fourth year, has established partnerships with several local universities, including Loyola University, Northeastern University, Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Dominican University.

Our university partners have consistently praised the well-administered nature of our program under David Banas's direction. Moreover, our interns have honored us with rave reviews, highlighting the professionalism, guidance, and hands-on experience they receive during their time with us.

Interns in our program, whether pursuing a BSW or Master's degree in Social Work, gain invaluable hands-on experience working with adults living with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities. David's mentorship ensures that each intern completes their assigned weekly and monthly assignments while receiving weekly guidance and support.

Our comprehensive internship curriculum exposes students to key areas of practice within the social work field, allowing them to refine and apply concepts and skills learned during their academic journey. This program not only diversifies their field experience but also propels them toward achieving their career goals.

If you or someone you know is interested in applying for an internship with The Douglas Center, we invite you to reach out to David Banas, our Director of Program and Clinical Services, at dbanas@thedouglascenter.org. Join us in celebrating David's well-deserved recognition and his tireless commitment to nurturing the social work leaders of tomorrow.



David Banas, Director of Program and Clinical Services receives “Outstanding Field Instructor BSW” Award from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



Innovative Research in Nutritional Knowledge and Meal Preparation for Adults with Special Needs at The Douglas Center

Rachel Delman is a Doctoral student of Occupational Therapy at Midwestern University who completed her capstone research project at The Douglas Center. Throughout school, a few of Rachel's passions include health literacy, accessibility, and functionality in completing day-to-day tasks. Her research study assessed the effectiveness of participating in an intervention focusing on nutritional knowledge and independence in meal preparation for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). One of Rachel's goals was to contribute to an existing program at The Douglas Center called HealthMatters™ Program. She wanted to capture the perspectives of how adults with IDD make decisions related to their health and how that is implemented into their food choices.

The research study consisted of a four week-long curriculum addressing nutritional knowledge and skills for food preparation coupled with a pre/post-test assessment. The structure of the intervention included weekly group and individual sessions that addressed meal preparation skills with specific client centered support. The delivery of information was influenced by the fact that several of the study participants live in group homes and may not be involved in planning and preparing meals. The intervention focused on the following: nutritional content; learning to read and follow a recipe; kitchen and food safety; advocacy and identifying specific supports needed for choosing and preparing healthy meals; and preparing a healthy meal for the staff at The Douglas Center. Rachel is currently in the process of analyzing the results from the project within the next month.

Over the span of 14 weeks Rachel had the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with the staff and clients, as well as participate in a variety of enriching programs. To ensure best practices were utilized, Rachel collaborated with an

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Nurturing the Next Generation: The Douglas Center's Internship Program

The Douglas Center is thrilled to introduce our most recent students who have joined our Social Work Internship Program. Now entering its fourth year, this program has successfully nurtured the talents of fifteen remarkable individuals who have completed their internships with us.

This fall, we celebrated Greer, who completed her internship with The Douglas Center. Here's what she had to say about her experience:

"Hi, my name is Greer and I am a social work student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to intern at the Douglas Center for my undergraduate internship! This is the first time my school has worked with this agency and it has been such an amazing experience. I was given the opportunity to work with clients individually by providing 1:1 counseling, creating art projects with clients, and leading our "Let's Talk" group therapy sessions. These are just some of the highlights from my time as an intern at the Douglas Center. This internship has given me so many learning opportunities and experiences I couldn't get in the classroom setting, which is something I truly value. If you are someone who is a social work major (or in a related field) I highly recommend completing your internship at the Douglas Center. I definitely am going to miss the Douglas Center staff and participants. Hopefully I can plan a visit to come back and say hi to everyone soon!"

Our Internship program at The Douglas Center continues to thrive through partnerships with esteemed local universities such as Loyola University, Northeastern University, Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Dominican University. We are currently accepting applications from students attending these universities.

Social Work interns are integral members of our team, playing a crucial role in furthering The Douglas Center's mission of enhancing the lives of adults with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities by improving their independent living skills and enriching their quality of life.

Through our Social Work Internship program, our interns gain invaluable hands-on experience, applying their academic training while working alongside seasoned professionals. This dual approach allows them to meaningfully contribute to our mission while honing essential skills that will shape their career paths and personal interests.

Our commitment to nurturing the next generation of social workers includes mentorship, close supervision, and field instruction. Our interns have the unique opportunity to work directly with our program participants, gaining real-world experience in a variety of roles, including:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct interaction with program participants • Counseling support • Social media management • Intake processes | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to group homes • Presentations to Special Ed Schools • Administrative duties • Assisting with our "Art From The Heart" Art Show |
|---|--|---|

Our comprehensive internship curriculum is overseen by David Banas, LCSW, our Director of Program & Clinical Services. Interns receive ongoing guidance and mentoring from Mr. Banas, ensuring they meet their weekly and monthly assignments.

We welcome BSW and Master-level Social Work students who are eager to gain hands-on experience in working with adults living with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities. Our internship curriculum exposes students to key areas of practice within the social work field, providing them with opportunities to refine and apply their acquired knowledge and skills.

If you or someone you know is interested in applying for an internship with The Douglas Center, please reach out to David Banas, Director of Program & Clinical Services, at dbanas@thedouglascenter.org for more information.

Join us in celebrating our commitment to fostering the growth of future social work professionals and the meaningful contributions they make to our organization and community.

Innovative Research in Nutritional Knowledge and Meal Preparation for Adults with Special Needs at The Douglas Center (Cont'd)

interdisciplinary team involving a speech language pathologist, a medical doctor, an occupational therapist, and direct support professionals working in the units at The Douglas Center. Rachel witnessed the participants grow and develop skills related to advocacy, such as being more involved in decision making related to nutrition and food choices. She has expressed gratitude for being a part of this experience and appreciates being able to shed some light on the importance of supporting people with IDD in being more independent with their healthy food choices. There has been an overwhelming amount of interest from clients at The Douglas Center to be a part of this cooking group and Rachel hopes that her project will continue to make an impact.

Empowering Abilities: The Douglas Center's New Partnership With Cintas Corporation

The Douglas Center is excited to announce our newest business collaboration with the Cintas Corporation. Recently, Cintas entrusted The Douglas Center with a series of sewing projects. These projects represent more than just work; they represent opportunities. Opportunities for our program participants with special needs to engage in meaningful employment and earn a living. It's about fostering self-esteem, fulfillment, and financial improvement.

In addition to these projects, Cintas, invited The Douglas Center to present to their management team on the full scope of our center's capabilities. During this presentation, we showcased the exceptional talents and capabilities of our program participants, highlighting the remarkable work they contribute to various projects.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Cintas for this collaboration, which not only allows our participants to utilize their skills but also provides them with a profound sense of purpose. It's a partnership that provides an opportunity to thrive and contribute.

About The Douglas Center Business Solutions

Our **Business Solutions** program is committed to offering local businesses a range of cost-effective services that allow them to focus on their core operations. We collaborate with manufacturers, corporations, and individuals in the Chicagoland area, providing services such as manufacturing, industrial sewing, electronic recycling, piecework, packaging, assembly, and collating.

While we deliver quality and cost-effective services to our valued partners, our special needs participants continue to hone their work skills, gaining a profound sense of self-esteem and fulfillment. It's a symbiotic relationship that benefits everyone involved.

We invite you to consider The Douglas Center for your next manufacturing, electronic recycling, or commercial sewing project. Be assured that all work is meticulously inspected by our dedicated quality control specialists before each shipment.

Please don't hesitate to contact us for a quote today. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of our program participants and in the success of your projects. For more information, please reach out to Omar Khan, Director of Health & Wellness, Administration & Development, at omar@thedouglascenter.org.



The Douglas Center announces new business collaboration with the Cintas Corporation

Community Partners and Supporters attend Ribbon Cutting of The Douglas Center's "Employment Training Units"



*Hospitality Training Unit
L to R: Bonnie Kahn Ognisanti; Rifath Khan,
Mir Khan*



*Employment Training Units Ribbon Cutting:
L to R: Mir Khan; Rifath Khan; Beryl Herman;
Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen; Bonnie Kahn
Ognisanti*



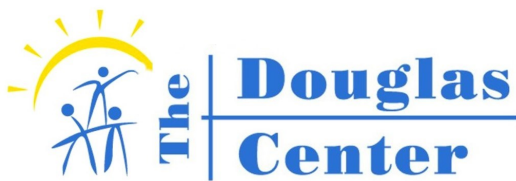
Community Partner: Talking Farm provides samples of their farming bounty!



Community Partner: Touched by an Animal displays the nurturing bond between people and their companion animals.

Rifath Khan presents details of the Office Training Unit





A ray of light for individuals with special needs

Established in 1999

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The Douglas Center serves to assist adults living with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities in improving their independent living skills and enrichment of their quality of life.

OUR MISSION

SAVE TIME AND FULLFILLMENT COSTS WITH BUSINESS SOLUTION SERVICES FROM THE DOULGAS CENTER



BUSINESS SOLUTIONS for businesses seeking to save costs while supporting individuals with disabilities.

The Douglas Center Work Center offers local businesses a variety of cost-effective services so that they can better focus on their core businesses. We collaborate with manufacturers, corporations, and individuals in the Chicagoland area for manufacturing, industrial sewing, electronic recycling, piecework, packaging, assembly and collating.

While we provide you with quality, cost-effective services, our special needs participants are able to continue to improve their work skills, providing them with sense of self-esteem and fulfillment. It's a win-win situation.

We ask that you consider The Douglas Center for your next manufacturing, electronic recycling, or commercial sewing project. Rest assured, all work is carefully inspected by quality control specialists prior to each shipment. Contact us for a quote today.

Together we can make a difference!

Call or email Mir Khan, Chief Operating Officer at mir@thedouglscnter.org or call: 847-674-1921.